



Local Enterprise Office Cork North and West

10 Digital Marketing Priorities for your Business

Course Summary

1st July 2026

Prepared by The Marketing Crowd *with the help of one of our AI colleagues* 😊

Priority 1: Get the Big Picture First

Before diving into tactics, it's worth understanding digital marketing as a connected system rather than a list of separate jobs. Think of it as five stages:

1. **Build three core skills** — video creation, professional graphic design (Canva), and using AI tools effectively. These underpin everything else you'll do.
2. **Build a website** — this is your sales environment. You control it completely (unlike a social media page), and you need a dedicated page for every product or service you offer.
3. **Make sure that website converts** — a website that just sits there as a "brochure" is a leaky bucket. It needs to be built to engage and convert visitors, not just display information.
4. **Prioritise your free traffic sources correctly** — traffic from Google Search (people actively looking for what you offer) converts at 3–4 times the rate of traffic from social media (people who weren't actively looking but got curious). This means:
 - **Local search** (e.g. "dog groomer in Macroom") — you need a strong **Google Business Profile** to appear in the map results.
 - **Non-local organic search** (e.g. "handmade candles Ireland") — you need strong **SEO** to appear in the 10 organic results.
 - **AI search** (Google AI Mode, ChatGPT, Gemini) — an entirely new and rapidly growing source of recommendations.
 - **Social media** (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn) — important, but secondary to search.
5. **Then, if budget allows, add paid traffic** — Google Ads (expensive but high-intent), Meta ads (cheaper, good for building awareness), and email marketing (a paid tool like MailerLite, but you own the list).

The key mistake to avoid: focusing heavily on Instagram or TikTok while ignoring Google Search. Social media is important, but it is not as important as being found on Google.

Priority 2: Use AI (ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude) Properly

Most business owners are barely scratching the surface of what these tools can do. A few fundamentals:

What they actually are: Large language models trained on enormous amounts of text and data, and then given the ability to generate their own answers (rather than looking up a fixed "correct" answer like an encyclopaedia). They also check the internet for up-to-date information when needed.

The three-part prompt formula. Every question ("prompt") you give an AI tool should include:

- **Context** — the more detail about your business, the more tailored the answer.
- **A role for it to act as** — always ask it to "act like an expert in..." rather than just asking a plain question. This makes it draw on higher-level knowledge.
- **Clarity on exactly what you want** — be specific about the output format (a plan, a list, a description, etc.)

Example: *"I have a driving school in Macroom, Co. Cork, and I'm looking to increase my sales. Act like a business growth expert and teach me how to increase my sales."*

Instant vs. thinking models. Free versions typically default to fast "instant" answers. Paid ChatGPT and free Gemini both offer a slower "thinking" model that produces noticeably better, more considered answers — worth switching to whenever you want quality over speed.

Personalisation (ChatGPT). In Settings → Personalization, there's an "About You" box — fill this in with details about your business, your customer segments, and what you want to grow. There's also a "Custom Instructions" box where you can tell it how to behave (e.g. "always act like a digital marketing expert," "write in UK English," "don't be sycophantic"). Once this is filled in, you don't need to repeat your business context in every prompt.

Deep Research. Available free in both ChatGPT and Gemini. Instead of an instant answer (seconds) or a thinking answer (up to 20 seconds), Deep Research takes 10–20 minutes, scans 40–50 sources, and produces a 10–25 page report. Excellent uses include:

- Researching all grants available for your specific business type across LEOs, ETBs, Fáilte Ireland, etc.
- A full SWOT analysis of your own business (it will scan your website, find competitors, and compare you).
- Industry trend reports for your specific sector.
- Competitor pricing and positioning research.

Attaching files and images (free, and unlimited in Gemini; limited to 3/day in free ChatGPT). You can attach:

- **Product photos** — ask it to write website copy or an Instagram caption; it will accurately describe what's in the image.
- **PDFs, spreadsheets, insurance policies, quotes, proposals** — ask it to summarise, flag gaps, or check you're covered. Ask follow-up questions about specific sections.

- **Videos** — it can genuinely watch and critique a marketing video (e.g. pointing out a weak first-three-seconds "hook," poor lighting, lack of captions).

Image generation and editing. Both tools can generate new images or edit existing ones — changing a product's colour, placing it on a different background, generating a different camera angle of the same model wearing the same product, or removing people/objects from a photo. This is genuinely useful for product photography and creating multiple images for an Instagram carousel without a new photoshoot.

Priority 3: Make Better Marketing Videos

Video is now central to reaching people on Instagram and Facebook — the algorithms actively favour it, and it's the main way to reach people who don't already follow you.

Key stat to remember: the average video view length on Instagram is around 9 seconds. Attention spans are short, so the first 3 seconds of any video are critical — if people don't stay past that point, the platform assumes the content is boring and won't show it to many people.

There are three types of marketing video:

1. **Lots of short clips set to music** — good for showcasing a location, a process, or a series of visually interesting moments. Works well for tourism, hospitality, hair/beauty, and similar businesses.
2. **Voiceover videos** — clips recorded first, then a voice recorded afterwards and layered on top. Very common and effective.
3. **Talking to camera** — the most powerful format for engagement, but essential for service-based businesses (coaches, advisors, consultants) where you *are* the product. If you offer a service rather than a visually interesting product, you generally need to be on camera sharing tips and advice — a straight sales post won't get much traction.

A useful rule of thumb: think of your business on a spectrum. Businesses with visually beautiful products (boutiques, jewellery, furniture) can rely on clips + music and can sell directly most of the time — people are happy to be sold to because they're passionate about the product. Service businesses need to lead with helpful tips and advice rather than direct selling, because the value isn't immediately visible the way a product photo is.

A useful tip for using AI here: describe your business and ask ChatGPT/Gemini to brainstorm reel ideas (e.g. "brainstorm 10 reel ideas for a parenting coach specialising in teenagers"). Once you pick an idea you like, ask it to break the video down — format, hook, structure — so you're not starting from a blank page.

Music note: business accounts on Instagram only get stock music, not commercial/copyrighted tracks. Switching to a **Creator account** unlocks the same music library available to personal accounts, at no extra cost.

Priority 4: Get a Website (If You Don't Have One)

There are two main routes:

Option 1 — Hire a local web designer.

- Treat this as choosing a long-term business partner, not a one-off job. A common frustration is designers who disappear after launch.
- Best approach: ask on social media for recommendations from people who've had ongoing support, then check whether that designer's *own* website ranks well on Google (if they can't rank themselves, they may not understand SEO).
- Downside: cost — often significantly more expensive than the DIY route.

Option 2 — Build it yourself using a website builder.

- [Wix.com](https://www.wix.com) — the most popular option, drag-and-drop, huge range of templates by industry, roughly €20–25/month once you go live, no design skill required.
- **Weebly** and **Squarespace** — similar alternatives with their own template styles.
- **Shopify** — the best choice specifically for e-commerce (selling physical products). More expensive (around €30/month) but has strong built-in sales features (recommended products, smooth checkout) that tend to increase sales.

A useful real-world comparison: a local web designer quote of €4,000–€7,000 versus a Shopify site built in an afternoon for around €30/month — allowing a business to test whether online sales work at all before committing serious money.

Why you need one at all, even if social media and markets are working for you: your reach on social media is limited to your existing followers and local area, you won't appear at all in Google search results without one, and increasingly, AI search tools won't recommend a business that doesn't have a website with content they can read.

Priority 5: Increase Website Conversion

Having a website isn't enough — most visitors leave without doing anything ("bouncing"). Getting more of them to browse around and engage massively increases your chances of converting them into a customer.

Step 1 — Don't frustrate people before they even arrive. Page speed matters enormously: research shows 40% of visitors give up if a page takes more than 4 seconds to load. Use the free tool gtmetrix.com to test your site's load speed (look at the "LCP" score — ideally under ~1.5 seconds).

Step 2 — Make it instantly obvious what you offer. The headline is the first thing people read, and it needs to make them think "that's exactly what I'm looking for" within seconds. A

useful AI prompt: *"I sell [your product]. Act like a marketing expert and tell me the top 3 things people are looking for in this product."* Then use those three things directly in your headline and page copy.

Step 3 — Build credibility signals. Stats about your track record are powerful: "85% of my pupils pass first time" or "25,000 lessons delivered" is far more convincing than simply "established business." Ask AI: *"What could I do on my website to establish credibility?"*

Step 4 — Encourage browsing. Use image and text links to other pages so visitors naturally explore more of the site rather than leaving after one page.

Step 5 — Entice and reassure to convert.

- **Entice** with offers — short-term offers (e.g. ending within 72 hours) work far better than long-running ones, because urgency focuses the decision. Genuine scarcity ("only 3 places left") also increases desire.
- **Reassure** with testimonials — a dedicated "Reviews" or "Happy Customers" section pulling in real reviews from Google, TripAdvisor, etc. builds trust. The tool **trustindex.io** can automatically pull reviews from multiple platforms and embed them on your site.

Priority 6: Optimise Your Google Business Profile

When someone searches with a location term (e.g. "restaurants in Limerick"), Google shows a map with three business profiles at the top, plus 10 "organic" website links below. Getting into that top-three map result — completely free — is one of the highest-value things a local business can do.

How to set one up: go to google.com/business, sign in with a Gmail account (ideally a dedicated business Gmail rather than a personal one, to keep everything separate), click "Add a business," and follow the prompts. You'll need to verify your location, usually by phone call or postcard.

How Google decides who appears in the top three:

1. **Relevance** — is your profile genuinely about what was searched, in the right location?
2. **Completeness** — is the profile fully filled in with photos, videos, opening hours, services, and a good description?
3. **Reviews** — how many you have, and how they compare to competitors already ranking. As a rough guide: look at how many reviews the current top three have, and aim to have more than the lowest of them.

Practical steps to optimise your profile:

- Add multiple relevant categories (not just one) — ask ChatGPT/Gemini for category suggestions based on your business.
- Write a full description including your services, what makes you different, and how established you are — ask AI to draft this for you using your business details.
- Fill in opening hours, contact details, service areas, and links to your website/social media.
- Upload photos and videos regularly — the same kind of content you'd post to social media.
- List every specific service you offer individually.
- Use the "Ask for review" link (found in the profile dashboard) — send this directly to customers, ideally with a message explaining *why* the review matters to you (small/family businesses competing against larger companies), rather than a generic ask. This significantly increases response rates.

Why reviews matter even more now: AI search tools (see Priority 8) draw heavily on review volume and content when deciding who to recommend — so review-building isn't just for the map result anymore.

Priority 7: Understand the Basics of Google SEO (Organic Search)

For a general search with no location term (e.g. "car insurance"), Google shows 10 "organic" web page results. Around 70% of searchers never go beyond page one, and 95% never go beyond page three — so ranking matters enormously.

How Google decides rankings, in simple terms: Google sends automated "spiders" to scan your website roughly once a week, checking around 200 factors, including page load speed, page content, and how trustworthy your site appears to be. Broadly it comes down to three things:

1. **The most relevant page.** Crucially — Google wants the most relevant *page*, not just the most relevant website. If someone searches "dog-friendly hotel Killarney," they want a page specifically about dog policies, not just your homepage. This means: **create a separate, dedicated page for every distinct product, service, or topic you want to be found for** — don't cram multiple services onto one page.
2. **Domain trust ("domain authority").** Built up over time, largely through other reputable websites linking back to yours. You can ask AI to teach you backlink-building strategies relevant to your industry.
3. **Page speed.** Same principle as conversion — slow pages are penalised.

The two most important on-page elements to fill in for every page:

- **The meta title** — the invisible text in the browser tab, which most site owners never bother filling in, but which Google weights very heavily. This should clearly state what the page is about (e.g. "Digital Marketing Trainer | Social Media Trainer | Your Business Name").
- **The headline** — write it for people first, but try to naturally include your main search term once or twice.

Practical example of the principle in action: searching "AI digital marketing trainer" returned nothing for one business — until a dedicated page on that exact topic was created, after which it started appearing. The same page, written more generally, wouldn't have worked.

Common mistake to avoid: cramming multiple services onto a single "Services" page (e.g. one page covering waxing, tanning, and eyebrows together). Google sees this as unfocused and is unlikely to rank it well for any single search term. Create a separate page per service instead.

Priority 8: Understand Google AI Search (AI Mode)

Google Search is shifting rapidly towards an AI-powered experience ("AI Mode"), which is increasingly being blended into standard search results and is expected to eventually replace the traditional search format. Instead of ten links, AI Mode gives direct recommendations with explanations — and you can ask follow-up questions, just as you would with ChatGPT.

Why this matters for your business:

1. **You need a website with a dedicated page for each product/service** — without one, AI search tools have no way of knowing you offer that thing, and you won't be considered for recommendation at all.
2. **Do the searches you'd want to be found for, then ask the AI what criteria it used** to choose its recommendations (e.g. "What criteria did you use when recommending those?"). Compare that criteria against your own business — if you genuinely tick those boxes, make sure that information is clearly stated on your website (especially on your product/service or About Us pages), so the AI can "see" it the next time it scans your site.
3. **Reputation is heavily weighted.** This includes:
 - The *number* of reviews across platforms (Google, TripAdvisor, [Booking.com](https://www.booking.com), Facebook, etc.)
 - The *specific words* used in those reviews — if many reviews mention "family friendly," that reinforces your reputation for that exact quality.

- Whether your business is mentioned in articles or blog posts about your industry or product area — meaning online PR is becoming genuinely more important for search visibility, not just brand awareness.

A useful AI prompt for online PR: *"I have a [type of business] in [location]. I'm starting to understand that online PR has become more important for search engines and reputation, but I have no idea how to go about this. Act like an online PR expert and teach me what I need to know."* Follow up by asking it to brainstorm story "hooks," draft a press release, and identify relevant journalists or publications.

Priority 9: Understand How Social Media Algorithms Actually Work

The first hurdle: your profile grid. When a stranger lands on your Instagram or Facebook page, they form an instant, often subconscious judgement based on your existing posts. If it looks messy or boring, they won't follow — regardless of how good your actual products or services are. Always review your own grid as if you were a stranger seeing it for the first time.

The algorithm has two core jobs, and both hinge on one word: interesting.

1. **Deciding what goes into each person's feed.** The algorithm constantly analyses what each user searches for, watches, saves, and shares, and only shows them content it predicts they'll find interesting — this applies to your posts too, even reaching your own followers is not guaranteed.
2. **Evaluating every piece of content you post,** by tracking: what percentage of viewers watch past 3 seconds, what percentage watch to 50%/75%/100%, and — weighted especially heavily — saves and shares (since these require genuine interest, unlike a passive "like").

Where does your business sit on the "interesting" spectrum?

- **Visually striking products** (boutiques, jewellery, furniture, food) — people are naturally drawn in visually and are generally happy to be sold to directly, because they're already passionate about that type of product.
- **Services** (coaching, financial advice, consulting) — there's nothing inherently visual to show, and direct selling tends to feel like a turn-off. The solution is tips, advice, and talking to camera — subtly demonstrating expertise rather than overtly selling.
- **Many businesses sit in the middle** (hotels, guesthouses, yoga studios, etc.) and benefit from mixing visual content with tips and advice.

Using Instagram's built-in insights (available under "View Insights" on any Reel):

- **Average watch time** — compare against the platform average of ~9 seconds.

- **Skip rate** — the percentage of viewers who swiped away within the first 3 seconds. Compare your videos against each other to identify which openings ("hooks") are working, and do more of what performs best.

Timing matters, but it depends on your spectrum position. Service-based content (which requires more attention and time to engage with) tends to perform best after 8pm, when people have more downtime. Visually striking product content tends to perform consistently well throughout the day.

Priority 10: Don't Neglect Email Marketing

Organic reach on social media has declined dramatically — average Facebook page reach is now around 5% of your followers, and Instagram is somewhat better at 10–20%. This makes email one of the only channels where you have direct, guaranteed access to your audience.

How to grow your list:

- Use **lead magnets** on your website — something genuinely useful enough that a visitor will trade their email address for it (e.g. "Download our 20 tips for X," or a first-order discount code).
- Promote these lead magnets through your social media posts to convert followers into email subscribers.

Recommended tool: MailerLite — free for your first 250 subscribers, then around €10/month. Handles design, sending, and list management.

How to use your list well: Don't turn every email into a hard sell — subscribers will quickly stop opening emails that only ever ask them to buy. Mix genuine tips and advice with occasional promotions, in the same way social media content works best when it's mostly helpful and only sometimes salesy.

Quick Reference: Tools & Resources Mentioned

Tool	Use
ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude	AI assistants for marketing advice, copywriting, image generation, research
GTmetrix.com	Free website page-speed testing
Wix.com , Weebly.com , Squarespace	DIY website builders
Shopify	E-commerce-specific website builder
google.com/business	Set up and manage your Google Business Profile
trustindex.io	Pull reviews from multiple platforms onto your website
MailerLite	Email marketing tool (free up to 250 subscribers)

Action Steps

1. Identify where you sit on the "products vs. services" spectrum, and let that shape your social media and video content strategy.
2. If you don't have a website, decide between hiring a designer or building one yourself on Wix/Shopify — and get one live.
3. Test your website's load speed on gtmetrix.com and fix anything over ~2 seconds.
4. Claim or fully optimise your Google Business Profile — fill in every section and start actively asking customers for reviews.
5. Audit your website structure — make sure you have one dedicated page per product/service, each with a clear meta title and headline.
6. Try a Google AI Mode search for your own business type and location, then ask "what criteria did you use?" to see where you stand.
7. Start using AI tools properly — fill in ChatGPT's personalisation settings and try a Deep Research report on your own business or industry.
8. Set up (or start using) an email list with a simple lead magnet on your website.

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