

MARKETING  
MENTOR

The **Simplest**  
**Marketing**  
**Plan**  
**2021**

Take control of your marketing  
and your business to get  
the work you want, no matter  
what the year brings.

by **Ilise Benun**

Founder of [marketing-mentor.com](http://marketing-mentor.com) &  
author of 7 books, including  
*The Creative Professional's Guide to Money*

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## Message from Ilise Benun of Marketing Mentor

**T**he Simplest Marketing Plan is my best attempt yet to distill into a simple framework the kind of marketing that has been proven to work for creative professionals (or actually anyone selling a service to other businesses). But there is one catch — it only works if you implement it.



In a nutshell, the Simplest Marketing Plan is designed to help you leave the feast or famine syndrome behind by building a marketing machine that keeps your pipeline just full enough to allow you to choose who you want to work with. I've distilled it down to these three most effective marketing tools:

- **Strategic Networking:** Finding “your people” — ideally in real time and in person but also online — and building relationships with them over time so they can come to you for help when they're ready or send ideal clients your way at the perfect moment.

- **Targeted Outreach:** Choosing carefully who you want to work with, whom you are most competent and confident about serving, then reaching out to them and letting them know you are there to help.
- **Content Marketing:** Creating high-quality content that positions you as an authority and speaks to the needs, goals and pain points of your ideal clients so they self-select and come looking for more, while weeding out everyone else.

This plan is not a one-size-fits all — it is designed for you to tailor to your own needs. That means

“This is marketing in a nutshell — **this is what you need to understand**, and then put into place. Easier said than done, but it won't overwhelm, once you get it.”



everyone should (and does) use the Simplest Marketing Plan differently, adapting and customizing it to their own strengths, schedule and preferred format.

In this companion to the Simplest Marketing Plan, my goal is to show you a few of the different ways it has been adapted, so you are not starting from scratch to figure out what works best for you — although you are welcome to do that if you like. You'll see the Simplest Marketing Plan in Action for four very different creative professionals who have done an excellent job of learning, absorbing and applying the tools to their own situations and preferences.

How should you use it? Some people (like Danielle) internalize it immediately and never need the document again. Others (like Mikel) prefer to have a fresh and new Simplest Marketing Plan every month. And everything in between.

All of these clients signed up for my [Quick Tips](#), came to me via my [Marketing Mentor podcast](#) and/or heard me speak at a conference, then “marinated in my content marketing” until they were ready for the next step. And that’s what this process teaches you to do with your own clients, too. Once you get the Simplest

Marketing Plan’s three foundational elements in place, you’ll have a powerful marketing machine that I can guarantee will transform your business!

I hope you enjoy the success stories in The Simplest Marketing Plan in Action. You’ll also find a curated round-up of excellent examples, best practices, recommended tools, and bonus resources, including videos and podcasts, to inspire you to keep doing what works to grow your business.

*Tise Benun*

[marketingmentor.com](http://marketingmentor.com)



Subscribe to the [Marketing Mentor podcast](#) to hear more inspiring conversations and insights into the business of being creative.



A FEW WORDS ABOUT

*Mikel*

Mikel is one of those rare creatives who needs nothing more than clear guidance. He bought the Simplest Marketing Plan and ran with it. Beyond the free mentoring session we had, during which I gave him a few suggestions, he's been using the Simplest Marketing Plan on his own. He's customized it to integrate with the favorite tools he uses each day. He also attends my monthly "Office Hours" video call and has since connected on social media with several of my other clients as well. This is why Mikel is getting excellent results, proving that, with the right motivation and framework, it is indeed possible to grow a creative business. — **Ilise**



## How the Simplest Marketing Plan Gave Me the Focus and Framework to Grow My Business

by Mikel Martinez

I discovered Ilise Benun on the Unemployable podcast's **How to Earn More on Every Project with Tiered Pricing** episode. I immediately felt a connection to Ilise — her message, her tone and calming voice on the podcast. —>

“There’s value in this,” I remember thinking, “and I’ve got to listen to her!” And I liked the way Ilise didn’t portray herself as a guru, like so many marketing experts I come across.

I started watching Ilise’s [YouTube videos](#) and signed up for her Quick Tips emails, so that I could learn even more.

### **Diligent use of the Simplest Marketing Plan gave me a structured process to follow, which began paying off right away.**

I purchased [The Simplest Marketing Plan](#) and started using it in 2019, but I have to admit it wasn’t until later in the year that I started taking the document seriously. I realized I needed to get different results for my business, and that meant doing things differently. Diligent use of the plan gave me a structured process to follow, which began paying off right away.

In April 2019, I reached out to Ilise to learn more about her one-on-one mentoring service and was planning on moving forward with coaching, but then life happened and my wife lost her job. While my wife looked for new employment, I kept my focus on my business: reading Ilise’s periodic emails,

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**I realized I needed to get different results for my business, and that meant doing things differently.**

picking up tips and advice along the way, and following the powerful framework of the marketing plan.

If you’re considering Ilise’s marketing plan (or any other tools), here’s my advice on making the most of her self-directed resources:

- **Carve out time from your busy week for focused planning.** When I first started using the Simplest Marketing Plan, I would go to a coffee house with printed copies and notes I’d been taking about my business goals. (I actually had three copies of the plan: one for my first draft, one for a more polished second draft and the third being my final plan!) I found that having this time away from my home office made the planning process more meaningful each month and something I looked forward to.

- **Don't just take some of a marketing tool's advice, take all of it.** The Simplest Marketing Plan includes a section for strategic networking — something I'd been avoiding — with a suggested goal of attending at least one event per month. It motivated me to begin taking networking seriously. I visited many groups, found some I didn't like and some that fit me perfectly. Marketing's a popular topic at networking groups, so I was able to tune in to people's pain points. (This is something Ilise preaches in her marketing emails.) Thanks to my new focus on networking, I've been featured on one of the group's websites, spoke on the topic of digital marketing, and — even better — I gained eight new clients in just four months of networking.
- **Keep the tool visible, not tucked away in a drawer or buried in email.** Each month, I tack my marketing plan to my whiteboard, so I see it when I'm in my office. It reminds me of focus areas that are important to my business — my target market and income goals, my plan for the content marketing I need to do — and more.

To say my business benefited greatly from Ilise's simple but powerful plan is an understatement. It helped me face the reality of my business (I needed more clients!) and shifted my mindset and actions to better power my business. Today, I have a growing list of clients, a steady stream of income, meaningful work I can do

safely from my home (I'm writing this in April 2020), and I hired interns who now work with me. I'm excited about the future and building on all I've learned from meeting Ilise!



#### Mikel Martinez

Mikel is the owner of [Mikel Media](#). His company provides project management, logistics, digital marketing and business coaching services. Mikel calls himself a professional chameleon (and that's the title of a book he's authoring, too!) because he enjoys doing a little bit of everything.



#### Learn More About Mikel

Connect with Mikel on [LinkedIn](#).

Check out Mikel's favorite marketing tool, [Plutio](#). It's what he uses to track projects and generate client invoices, and he incorporated the Simplest Marketing Plan, too.

[Sign up](#) for Mikel's email newsletter.

## A business expert for creative professionals



**Ilise Benun is the author of seven books for creative professionals, a national speaker and teacher to the creative class. Through her**

**mentorship programs, courses and materials, she helps you build the creative business that provides the life and freedom you want.**

### **Industry-shaping programming and leadership**

In her more than 30 years in coaching, she's developed and delivered programming for creative professionals as instructor at the Maryland Institute College of Art and as "Business Coach" for the Savannah College of Art & Design. She's also co-founder and host of the creative business and

design entrepreneurship program for HOW Design Live, and has conducted marketing workshops for art schools and trade organizations catering to the creative community, including International Freelancers Day, the NYU Entrepreneurship Summit, HOW Interactive Conference and many more.

### **Advice for (and from) the independent worker**

After quitting her first two jobs out of college (and, OK, one of those may have been involuntarily resigned), Ilise declared herself unemployable and launched her own business as a professional organizer. She started out helping her friends in the creative community in New York stay on top of unpaid bills, unfiled paperwork, and all the other things the artists weren't getting around to doing. As she spent more time with these stacks of paper, she invariably came across some sheet at the bottom of the pile that piqued her curiosity. When client after client brushed these scraps off as

unrealized self-promotion ideas, Ilise recognized the crux of the starving artist problem and set out to help them carve out lives of stability and prosperity through small, consistent acts of marketing. She's passionate about helping creative professionals break out the feast-or-famine cycle to build the businesses and lives they love.

### **Nationally published author**

A nationally published author and speaker, Ilise hosts two podcasts, writes one of the 100 Best Business Blogs, and publishes a bi-weekly email newsletter read by more than 15,000 creative professionals. She's been featured in and contributed to Entrepreneur.com, HOW Magazine, Toronto Globe and Mail, Inc. Magazine, Nation's Business, Self, Essence, Crains New York Business, Dynamic Graphics, Working Woman, The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Denver Post, Fast Company, and more.

### **Live training, courses & events**

Ilise is programming partner for HOW Design Live and co-founder of the Creative Freelancer Conference, launched in 2008. She's also developed and delivered online courses and content for the Maryland Institute College of Art's Graduate Program, and HOW Design University, covering topics from graphic design proposals, earning more, strategies for freelancers, successful online marketing plans, and how to start as a freelance business.

She was also the lead developer of and trainer for Freelancers Union's online program "Freelancer 360: How to Be a Better Boss of You," a series of workshops and panels led by expert freelancers covering work-life balance, thriving networks, lasting client collaborations, optimizing day-to-day operations and planning for growth.



**To buy the full version of Ilise's "Simplest Marketing Plan," [click here!](#)**