MARKETING TOOLS TO GROW YOUR BUSINESS

Get the tools you need to save hours per week, automate your activities and save you money.

OVERVIEW

Finding marketing tools to grow your business can be confusing, I get it! Especially, if you don't have any experience in marketing and have to research from scratch.

As Cofounder of LAIRE digital agency, marketing tools are something we rely on every day to operate our business more effectively. These tools can save you hours per week, automate your activities and save you money.

When it comes down to it, every business is unique, therefore not every solution will perfectly for everyone nor does every business need everything right away but you will as you scale and it's so helpful to know where to turn. I have used most of these tools myself as we have scaled our business to over a million dollars. I am sharing these tools which will help a starter business with one operator all the way to large multi-million dollar businesses and everything in between. I hope this will help you navigate your choices more effectively.

Included are all the links and special deals for the beginner all the way to the seasoned pro.

Laura

*A couple of the links below are affiliate links, which means I may get a commission if you purchase. However you won't be paying more to compensate me, in fact, you may be getting special discounts directly from the vendor as a special gift to you.

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EMAIL TOOLS

There are nitty gritty details that you might not know about when you start doing your research. For example, if your business is primarily creating courses or webinars, it might make sense to keep all of your email marketing messages connected within your course software. This helps with scalability in the long term. I started with Mailchimp, then graduated to Ontraport and now use Kajabi.

MAILCHIMP

Mailchimp is probably the most common email service provider. It does all the little things and for zero dollars per month. If you're hooking it up to your website, you may have to download some plugins and integrate it, (which might be a low cost per month), but this will get you up and running the fastest. It will hook up to your RSS feed, collect leads and integrate with most website providers.

CONSTANT CONTACT

You make have heard about ConstantContact (they're one of the key leaders in the market for beginners). However, I actually don't recommend them. They tend to run high on the cost side and don't connect to your RSS feed (your blog). Beware!

ONTRAPORT

I graduated from Mail Chimp to Ontraport as I was beginning to create landing pages since you can use it for email as well as landing pages and marketing automation. I like the email editor but it comes with a cost since you are integrating your marketing automation with email.
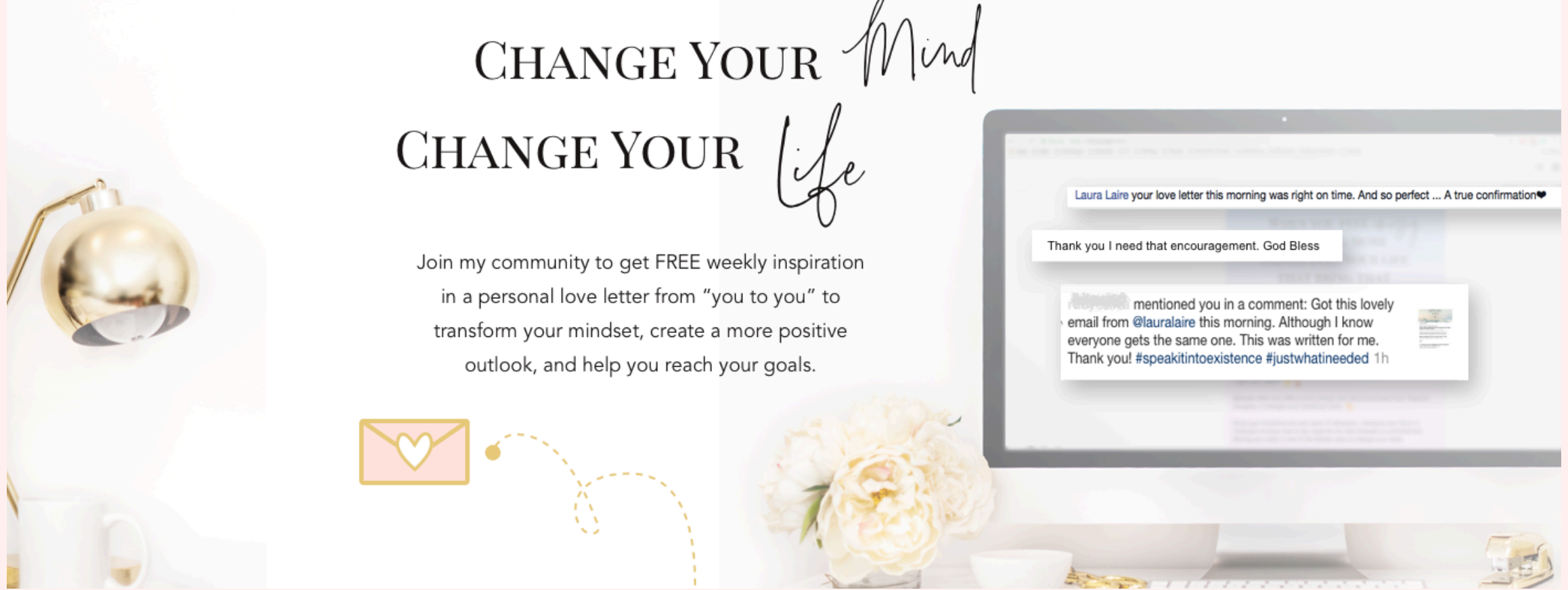
KAJABI

Kajabi is the email server I use because it combines a website (if you don't already have one) with courses, membership sites, landing pages as well as email marketing and marketing automation. I like Kajabi the best because it fills all my needs for a small to medium-size businesses selling online courses.

CONVERTKIT

In terms of the delivery of automation capabilities without being overly costly, yes to Convertkit. It focuses on a few key areas which are collecting leads, email send outs with my RSS feed, connecting with my community and being sustainable. Not a good fit if you intend to launch courses or membership sites.

CHANGE YOUR *Mind*
CHANGE YOUR *Life*

Join my community to get FREE weekly inspiration in a personal love letter from "you to you" to transform your mindset, create a more positive outlook, and help you reach your goals.

Laura Laire your love letter this morning was right on time. And so perfect ... A true confirmation♥

Thank you I need that encouragement. God Bless

mentioned you in a comment: Got this lovely email from @lauralaire this morning. Although I know everyone gets the same one. This was written for me. Thank you! #speakitintoexistence #justwhatineeded 1h

LANDING PAGES

Landing pages are the lifeblood of any online business. From email opt-in's to thank you pages and sales pages, landing pages are where the magic happens. If you want to capture emails or sell a product online you will need landing pages. There are several options to choose from whether you want a stand alone or prefer something integrated with the rest of your software.

LEAD PAGES

I would recommend Lead Pages to anyone looking for a simple way to get a landing page, full website or a way to collect quality leads. It is a great resource to build site pages, promote it on Facebook and other social media and collect quality leads while tracking analytics for each page. It is however, difficult to use and they do have poor customer service so just watch out!

ONTRAPORT

Ontraport is an all in one tool I have used as I described earlier under emails. I have used Ontraport for many landing pages and I like the ease of use along with the email system. However, you can't store courses, a membership site or your website in Ontraport. While I like Ontraport, Kajabi was a better fit for me in the long run since I have courses and other needs.

KAJABI

Kajabi is the email server I use because it combines a website (if you don't already have one) with courses, membership sites, landing pages as well as email marketing. I like Kajabi the best because it fills all my needs for a small to medium-size business. Side note: Kajabi has a conference every year and it was by far my favorite marketing conference I've attended to date. That's my favorite reason to be a kajabi hero! :)

HUBSPOT

This tool is really its own animal since it combines sales, marketing, and CRM in a single package, allowing you to purchase modules separately or in a single bundle. Basically, Hubspot can eliminate the need to use third-party software and save time and money in literally any business environment. It costs more per month but gives you a comprehensive platform and is really the best for larger businesses. Hubspot is our preferred software at LAIRE agency which is why we are a platinum Hubspot partner. Hubspot must be purchased through an agency if you want marketing automation support so please contact todd@lairegroup.com if you are interested in Hubspot.

SOCIAL MEDIA SCHEDULING TOOLS

With social media, consistency is key. A content plan and social media schedule will not only help you maintain a regular flow of content, but it'll also simplify your process and save you time – which you can then allocate to other aspects of your business.

HOOTSUITE

I have used Hootsuite to manage my social media calendar as well as clients in the agency. You can even schedule one post selecting multiple accounts, given the size of the image matches the social channel's requirements. It has a free version which is great when starting out with only a couple of social channels. Very efficient!

LATER

Later can help you create Instagram content and story organization, planning, and scheduling intuitively and visually all in a single tool. I have not used this tool personally but think it's worth checking out.

FEEDLY

Feedly can help you navigate, gather, collate, organize and consume web content into a cohesive experience. It's useful for monitoring brand or product mentions, competitor activities, and article keywords. It can then issue alerts and notifications pertaining to content that features those keywords. It automatically brings together your preferred sources of content, spanning websites, news outlets, blogs, digital publications, and even YouTube video channels into a single place.

PLANOLY

If you are an Instagrammer Planoly is a must for creating visually compelling images and layouts. I love Planoly since I am a creative person and I use it to write posts where I can see them and move them around. It's visually fun and easy to use but only for Instagram and Pinterest.

BUFFER

If you just want to time your posts out rather than schedule them on specific days then buffer will help you create a buffer between when you create a post and when it actually posts.

SOCIAL MEDIA SCHEDULING TOOLS

With social media, consistency is key. A content plan and social media schedule will not only help you maintain a regular flow of content, but it'll also simplify your process and save you time – which you can then allocate to other aspects of your business.

COSCHEDULE

I like that Coschedule offers a content calendar so you can plan your posts with your team. There is a repost function on Coschedule so you can "Reuse" content again if it performed well. It's more costly than something lke Hootsuite so better for someone who is not just starting.

MEETEDGAR

Edgar reuses your content to bring in more views every month and keeps it in a library. You tell Edgar when you want to post on a schedule and from which category to which channel. It also categorizes groupings for your calendar. For example, I automate topics like "Quotes," "Blog Posts," or "Courses," on specific days for specific channels so I can focus on the native posting that I enjoy so much but not lose valuable content that I may want to reuse especially if engagement was low. Meet Edgar is a gem if your content is evergreen.

SPROUT SOCIAL

Sprout really helps promote and streamline communication between our business and our customers, prospects, and enthusiasts. Through its three main functionalities (publishing, engagement, and analytics), we've effectively progressed in social communication. We have used Sprout for clients especially for easy to understand analytics however it's not cheap.

PASSWORD MANAGER TOOLS

A password manager can change your life. It might seem like another step or another thing to worry about over the course of the day, but setting up a password manager is actually a lot easier and takes less time than what you might think. It only takes approximately two minutes to set up a password manager. You probably spend more time during the day on Facebook…Your life just became A LOT easier. Finally, by using a password manager, you not only increase your security by 300%, you are also saving yourself time, money, and adding more time today, ultimately boosting productivity. It's a win-win.

LASTPASS

Every business should have this, I swear! This tool has saved me hours of time and frustration when it comes to finding passwords. It's time to create an account on LastPass, this kickass tool will manage all your passwords so you can securely share your login information with your team and never forget a password.

DASHLANE

I've used Dashlane and it is effective. I just prefer lastpass better. Dashlane's navigation and dashboard is a bit tricky and not very user friendly.

KEEPER

My experience with Keeper is okay. I still prefer lastpass above all these. Keeper's navigation and dashboard is also a bit complicated, ads keep popping up as well and too many other pop ups.

WEBINAR PLATFORMS

Webinars are powerful, and certainly there are a lot more than 10 reasons to run them. Hopefully this list inspires you to get out there and use webinars in your business, whether they're for lead generation, sales, training, or all of the above.

ZOOM

Zoom is a very easy, reliable platform for video and audio conferencing, collaboration, chat, and webinars across mobile devices, desktops, telephones, and room systems. It's a conference room solution for board, conference, huddle, and training rooms, as well as executive offices and classrooms. Keeps a history of your recorded meetings as well! I love ZOOM for meetings!

GOTOWEBINAR

What I like most about it is it's extremely useful if you want to expand the reach of your business with reusable content. I use this for training and knowledge sharing or in marketing campaigns where I have to demonstrate how our products work or how beneficial our services are. It doesn't require any IT expertise as set up is a breeze and getting started doesn't take too long. You can start your own webinar in mere minutes right after setup. You can record your webinars using webcams. It's

WEBINARJAM – LIVE

Great for its "deliver 24/7 scale". It will do the rest of the heavy lifting. Ideal for coaches, trainers, info product makers, workshops, lead generation, networking, team meetings and the list is as big as your imagination. I have no experience using webinarjam as I decided to go with Zoom to meet all my needs however check it out if you are in the market for a webinar platform.

EVERWEBINAR

Ideal for automated evergreen webinars – meaning you can record a webinar once, and have it replay and live on forever. Yes, you can host a live webinar using this, with customers who register, attend, and ask questions throughout. You can then take a recording of that webinar, and upload it to EverWebinar to make it an automated, on-demand webinar. To the guest, the experience feels completely live.

DESIGN TOOLS

Graphic design communicates more than just words to your audience. Even simple design elements like font choice and color scheme can help to portray an emotion or feeling that supports your message.

Having a branding guide in place will help you and your team choose design elements that tell the same story and keep the look of your brand consistent.

CANVA

Canva is the bomb.com. It offers a simple yet robust online design platform that can turn any idea into a powerful, stunning designs and graphics easily and quickly. It is an ideal design tool and content creation platform for those who are not graphically inclined. It has the tools and functionalities that enables you to create awesome, appealing, and relevant content and the capabilities to make the process easy and seamless. It's also super affordable.

WORDSWAG

It's an app installed on an iPad or iPhone which will give you many opportunities that will enable you to add quotes, words or text that you want in different layouts. It has a quotes generator and cool typography that you will like. This is a good choice for creating creative unique social squares and motivational content or watermarking your posts easily on your phone.

LIGHTROOM

As we know, lightroom has both PC and mobile app for photo editing. But both are great tools from photo enhancements to alterations and more PRO features.

One of my personal favorites. The best things about this app, is it lets you customize filters and save those for future use. Very user-friendly and high quality photos even for a mobile app. Content/photos can also be easily shared to other social media sites.

WEBSITE

I won't give you different platforms for how big your business is, but what I will say is that you want to build for sustainability.

WORDPRESS

You can use WordPress to build almost any kind of website imaginable, no matter what kind of website you want to build, chances are that there is probably an existing WordPress plugin (extension) for that. In case you don't find a plugin, you can easily hire from thousands of developers to make it for you. I started on a wordpress blog then went to self hosted. I started with a template then moved on to create a custom site several times over. As time has gone by I have learned how to edit code on the front and back end, however, that's not always a good use of time. It is pretty easy to find a developer to help you make updates or even build a new site on wordpress.

SQUARESPACE

While Squarespace is not exactly difficult to use, it's still not the most intuitive tool. The user interface is minimalistic, but its usability could be improved. Templates are their greatest strength. The designs look both artistic and modern and there are a lot of them. It keeps adding new layouts and improves existing ones. There are detailed feature lists and every template design includes a Readme file with instructions. All templates are fully responsive and some of them also have special features for mobile devices. Pros can control the HTML/CSS in the "Business" Plan (via the Developer Platform).

WIX

Wix's drag-and-drop editor makes it easy to create a professional website – without having to know a line of code! With hundreds of templates and great tools it lets me build and sell through my site. Beginner-friendly and scalable, it is suitable for anything from personal online portfolios to small business websites. Easy to create stunning, powerful, interactive website for any project, business or idea you could possibly imagine – and I can do it all in an afternoon, no coding required.

KAJABI

I specifically use Kajabi to sell and market my course platforms to highlight all of my paid content. The user experience is better than most platforms and it's super easy to sell your products. My website was already too established with content but if you are starting from scratch Kajabi is a great place to build your site.
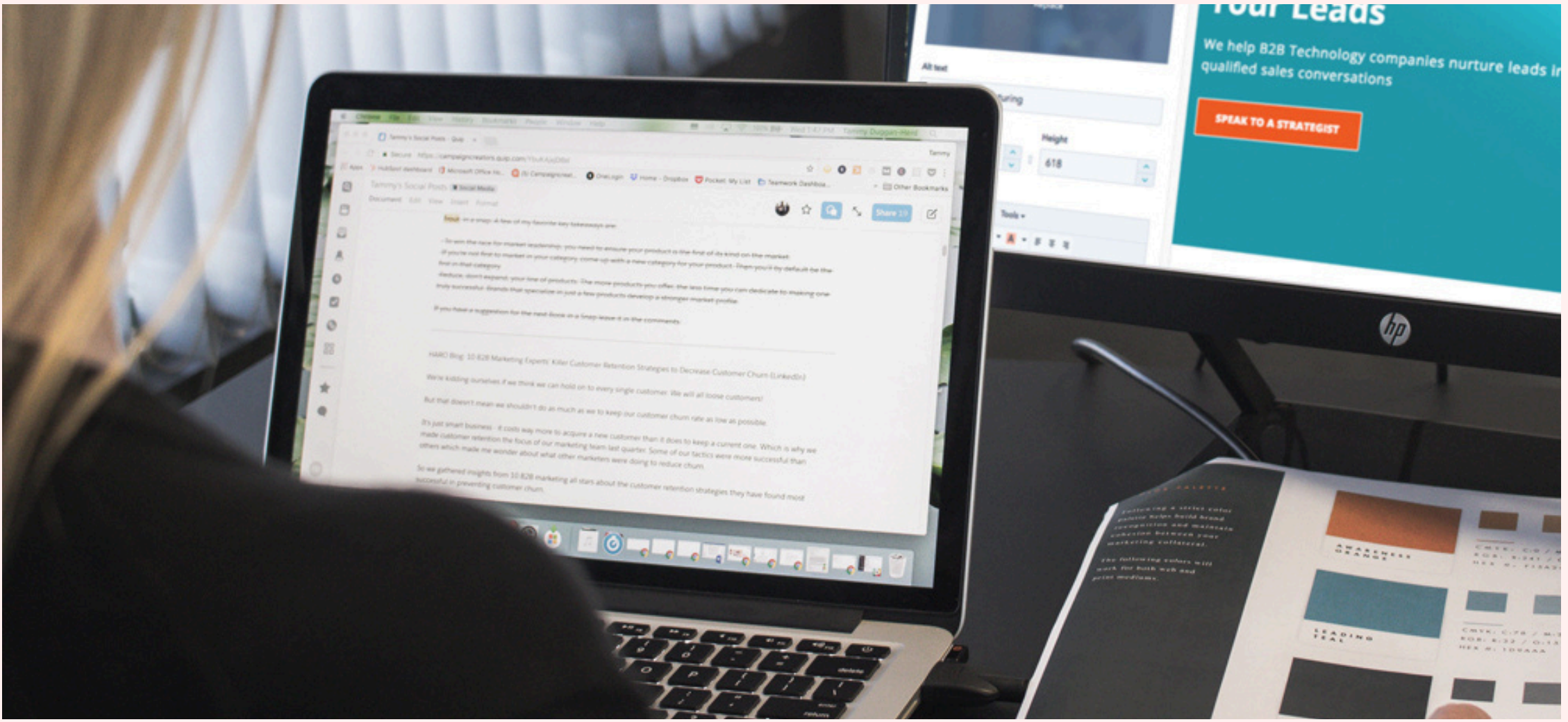
WEB HOSTING

Reliable and high-performing web hosting is a crucial part of any successful website. When you're thinking about building a new website, your choice of host is probably one of the last things on your mind. But, neglecting to choose the right host can have disastrous effects on your website—and your business.

GODADDY

It's incredibly easy and affordable to choose a domain name, sign up for hosting, and start building their online business or personal web property. While known for its domain, email, and shared hosting services, It offers options for virtual and dedicated servers as well.

DREAM HOST

DreamHost offers nuanced and performant hosting perfect for scaling websites and applications through the ranks of shared, VPS, cloud, and dedicated hosting.

CLOUD FLARE

We use CloudFlare for DNS hosting and protection against malicious attacks on our corporate web sites. CloudFlare is superior to any DNS that you get bundled with domain registrations so it is my go to for any hosting. It also solves the price equation with it being free for our level of usage. The interface is super easy to use to modify whatever settings you need. The advanced features are incredible! There is so much more you can do with CloudFlare that you'll likely never need to use it all. Although no customer service number so BEWARE, it's emails and community forums if you need to figure something out.

HOSTGATOR

If you're starting from the very beginning, I recommend creating a website with wordpress.org and hosting it with Hostgator. It's an effective and affordable way to make sure your site is always up and running and this is how I started.
Known mostly as a shared hosting provider, still supplies decent dedicated and VPS options if you need your site to scale.
Aimed primarily at the semi-technical user, it is flexible. It has nearly limitless options and control available for their servers, with the support and beginner-friendly tools that will appeal to the full range of customers.

VIDEO TOOLS

Video editing is important because it is the key to blending images and sounds to make us feel emotionally connected and sometimes truly there in the film we're watching. It's a safe assumption to say that video editing is among the most important jobs in the film industry. With professional video editing you can create an emotion-evoking masterpiece, and it can make or break your film, which is why it's just as important to choose the right video editor as it is to choose the right camera equipment.

WISTIA

This is a company doing it right. Great training materials, both about how to use the product itself and industry best practices to help you build a video strategy. Its user interface is so visual and intuitive to navigate, which is important to me in video hosting platforms since I check analytics and details often. The ability to customize the player, add hyperlinks and forms directly into the videos, and track click rates of links are all really valuable tools for video marketing.

YOUTUBE

Do I need to say anything about Youtube?? Seriously, go watch a video.

VIMEO

For a more creative angle or higher quality productions, it has an excellent video player and solid mobile apps for discovering the best content, but it is held back by a cluttered web interface and restrictive price models. This is best suited for people who prioritize high-quality content over whatever happens to be trending. Short films, animation, informative pieces, and in-depth journalism are all at home here.

MOBILE APPS

Today, there are mobile apps specifically created for business. These apps are provided to help customers have easy access to such business anytime and possibly anywhere. For this business, the steady use of these apps by customers over time helps in the development of the business and the brand. These apps help customers to search, buy and pay for products and services they are in need of at any given point in time. More so, mobile applications for business are increasingly becoming marketing tools.

REPOST

This app has been a reliable downloading tool for me. It works perfectly for saving and collecting photos and videos. It's very intuitive so you don't have to be jumping from one place to another to do your repost

PHOTOSHOP FIX

This app is very smart and knows what to replace and does it cleanly plus it's easy and quick to use. It also has other filters like blurring the background so it looks like the photo is focused on one thing. It also has a feature that allows you to revoke an object with colors you chose. This app is a completely free, it that allows you to do many things!

LIGHTROOM

One of my personal favorites. The best things about this app, is it lets you customize filters and save those for future use. Very user-friendly and high quality photos even for a mobile app. Contents/photos can also be easily shared to other social media sites.

STOCK PHOTO SITES

Stock images do have their uses, which usually come down to speed, budget, and media.

Stock photography is generally considered a poor substitute for a custom photo shoot. The shots are taken in advance and delivered "as is," leaving no chance to redirect the subject matter
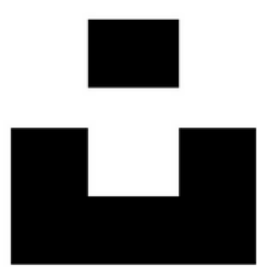
SC STOCKSHOP

20 free images immediately and free images per month - high-end specific color branded and beautiful images.

RAW PIXEL

Free and premium review images, vectors and psd mockups

UNSPLASH

Free stock images, like seriously. Plus, HD photos which are available to download anytime without having to sign up or anything like that!

FOODIESFEED

Tons of food images for you to choose from!

SHUTTERSTOCK

Royalty-free stock images, photos, videos, and more for your creative projects.

MARKETING AUTOMATION

The purpose of a marketing automation platform is to streamline sales and marketing organizations by replacing time-wasting procedures with automated solutions. Put succinctly, this process allows marketers to measure, manage, coordinate and plan all of their marketing campaigns both online and offline and demonstrates the importance of marketing automation. Software platforms and technologies designed so that marketing departments and organizations can more effectively market on multiple online channels (i.e. websites, social media, email) and automate repetitive tasks.

ACTIVE CAMPAIGN

Learn this tool; it can literally set up a small business on autopilot for initial inquiries, helping you figure out what's working and what's not. Lead scoring tools are rarely used, but should be regardless; you'll know more about your audience using Activecampaign - their tracking of visits to the site can help you improve funnels and spot weaknesses quickly, and adapt.

HUBSPOT

This tool is really its own animal when it comes to social media marketing and content creating. It costs more dollars per month but gives you a comprehensive platform. Hubspot is our preferred software at LAIRE agency.

Hubspot combines sales, marketing, and CRM in a single package, allowing us to purchase modules separately or in a single bundle. Basically, it can eliminate the need to use third-party software and save time and money in literally any business environment. We are hard core Hubspotters at LAIRE agency and recommend it to all our clients.

ONTRAPORT

Ontraport is similar to Hubspot yet not in the same ballpark at all. If you are just starting out Ontraport may be more affordable to bundle all the services you need like email marketing, marketing automation, landing pages etc. It is easy to use and learn.

KAJABI

Kajabi is the email server I use because it combines a website (if you don't already have one) with courses, membership sites, landing pages as well as email marketing. I like Kajabi the best because it fills all my needs for a small to medium-size business. Large businesses should use Hubspot.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

So why is project management important? Without it, teams and clients are exposed to chaotic management, unclear objectives, a lack of resources, unrealistic planning, high risk, poor quality deliverables, projects going over budget and delivered late. Great project management software delivers success, creates happy, motivated teams and allows them to do their best work by delivering a real return on investment, and that makes clients happy.

MONDAY.COM

is the software I have used for years. It is easy to use and affordable for any business.
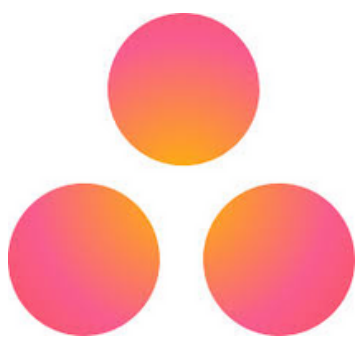
ASANA

Enables you to plan and structure work in a way that's best for you. It handily lets you set priorities and deadlines, share details and assign tasks—all in one place. To stay on track, it allows you to follow projects and tasks through every stage. You know where work stands and can keep everyone aligned on goals.

JIRA

Jira is a must for our agency to be agile. It helps us capture, assign, and set priorities to our work. It allows us to manage the whole process of projects and workload making sure that all things are covered. It's simple, intuitive interface enables collaboration with teammates and allows you to get the job done in an effective manner. It is built for larger teams like an agency however.

FLOW

Allows you to visually organize projects with top-down project management and in-depth task tracking. Each dashboard provides assigned tasks with its related conversations and documents. You can create dashboards for multiple departments with separate work environments. New members can be invited to specific projects or tasks and have optional restrictions to see only their work.

AIRTABLE

Airtable is an online collaboration tool that allows us to organize anything, including projects. It does a good job of combining powerful features with enough guidance to help you use them. It isn't perfect, but it's worth looking at for its strengths. That said, it belongs among the best project management software.

SCREEN RECORDING TOOLS

It is standard procedure in most workplaces to record everything of importance that transpires in a meeting. Methods of record-keeping may vary, but the most common method in today's emerging technology is screen recording whether video or audio. This ensures that all participants agree that the record is accurate.

QUICKTIME

Used by modern mac users just like me! Ya'll know the rest.

CAMTASIA

Camtasia can make great videos that show clients their website interfaces as we are developing them, and to create training videos explaining to clients on how to manage their websites. When we look at the clients existing website or software for analysis we create friendly talkative screencast videos for the client. It's like we are right there next to the client talking to them as they can see our screens and hear our voices. Loom is my favorite however.

LOOM

This is my favorite for recording training videos and sharing with your team on Slack. Allows you to make quick videos using a lightning-fast video recorder capable of capturing your screen, webcam, and microphone.
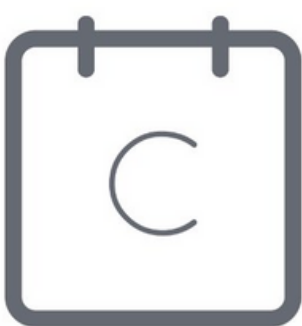
CALENDAR SCHEDULING

If you want to be productive, you must embrace the power of scheduling your tasks. You have two main tools that help you do this: your to-do list and your calendar.Your to-do list is the place where you define and organize what you're going to do.

ACUITY

Acuity manages our booking and syncing with Google Calendar, but it also integrates with our CRM Pipedrive. We use it both on the computer and mobile application while out of the studio with clients which has made booking incredibly easy and no longer a frustration. On top of that, our no-shows have plummeted due to the automation reminder text messages and emails. With how busy everybody is anymore, reminders are so helpful and really make a huge difference so we don't get stuck waiting on a client who forgot to show up.

CALENDLY

I've used Calendly before, and the advantage of this tool is not having to go through the long threads of email, it makes scheduling very easy to accommodate and keeps you right on track. Navigation is friendly.

DOODLE

I've also used Doodle before. Its navigation is a bit difficult, but dashboard is okay. It does help you efficiently organize and schedule meetings but calendar efficiency could still be improved.