BOOK 03

Branding for Manufacturers

Win customers before the RFQ



FREE GUIDE

For SME owners and decision makers

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Branding for Manufacturers

Win customers before the RFQ: why customers judge you online first, and a simple website and LinkedIn plan to turn your capability into enquiries.

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First edition, working draft, November 2026.

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A note from the author

I came to branding from the buying side. My background is sourcing and supplier development, which means I have spent years doing exactly what your next customer is doing right now: searching for suppliers, opening their websites, and deciding in a minute or two who goes on the list.

I have rejected suppliers who, I later learned, were excellent. Their websites told me nothing. I have also visited suppliers whose presence promised more than the shop floor delivered. Both experiences taught me the same thing. For a manufacturer, brand is simply your real capability, made visible and believable to someone who has not met you yet.

More recently I have been on the other side, building websites and LinkedIn pages for manufacturing businesses, including launching a company page from zero for a European manufacturer entering India. This guide combines both views: what the customer looks for, and the practical steps to show it.

Who this is for

- Owners and directors of manufacturing and engineering SMEs who rely on reputation and referrals and sense that it is no longer enough.
- Suppliers with strong capability who are not being invited to quote by new customers.
- Manufacturers in India targeting European customers, and European manufacturers presenting themselves to Indian OEMs.

How to use it

Sections 1 and 2 explain the problem and let you score yourself. Sections 3 to 6 cover what to say and show. Sections 7 to 9 cover LinkedIn, content and enquiries. Section 10 is a 90-day plan. No marketing background is assumed.

My own route into this was through sourcing rather than marketing: more than 25 years in manufacturing, most of it buying bus and automotive parts across India, the UK and Europe. More recently I have been on the other side, building websites and LinkedIn pages for manufacturing businesses, including launching a company page from zero for a European manufacturer entering India.

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01
Customers judge you online first

How industrial buying has changed, what a customer does before they contact you, and why a good factory is no longer enough.

In this section

- What customers check before they call
- Why this matters more for manufacturers
- The cost of being invisible
- The customer's sixty seconds
- Who else is looking
- Cross-border customers
- Worked example: two suppliers, one search
- **Worksheet 1: The sixty-second test**
- Questions to ask your newest customers
- Common objections, myth and fact, tip of the day, action tasks and fun facts
- Section 1 in one page

A purchasing manager is given a new part to source. Before lunch they have searched online, looked at six supplier websites, checked three company pages on LinkedIn and built a short list of three. Two of the three they rejected in under a minute. Neither rejected supplier will ever know they were considered.

What happens before the RFQ

1	2	3	4	5
Search	Website: 60 seconds	LinkedIn check	Shortlist	RFQ

That is how most business between manufacturers now begins. The request for quotation, the RFQ, is not the start of the buying process. It is close to the end. By the time it is issued, the customer has already decided who looks capable, credible and easy to deal with. This guide is about being on that list.

What customers check before they call

What they look at	What they are deciding
Your website, for under a minute	Is this a real, current, capable business that makes what I need?
Photos of your factory and products	Does this look like a supplier at my standard?
Certifications and customers	Has someone I trust already approved them?
Your LinkedIn company page	Are they active, and who works there?
The profiles of your directors	Who will I be dealing with, and do they know the subject?
How to get in touch	Can I send an enquiry in two minutes and expect an answer?

> ***"The RFQ is not the start of the buying process. It is close to the end."***

Why this matters more for manufacturers

- **The customer is often far away.** A European customer assessing an Indian supplier, or an Indian OEM assessing a European one, cannot easily visit. The website is the first factory tour.
- **The risk is high.** Choosing a supplier is a career decision for a customer. Anything that reduces doubt works in your favour.
- **The competition looks alike.** When ten suppliers claim quality, delivery and price, the one who shows evidence stands out.
- **New people are doing the buying.** Younger engineers and purchasing staff research online by habit and distrust what they cannot find.

The cost of being invisible

Most manufacturing SMEs grew through relationships and word of mouth, and many still do good business that way. The risk is quiet. Your contacts retire or move. New programmes are sourced by people who have never heard of you. A competitor with half your capability and twice your visibility is invited to quote. You do not lose the order. You never knew it existed.

TRY IT NOW

Search for what you make, the way a customer would describe it, plus your region. Then open your own website on a phone and give it sixty seconds, as a stranger would. Write down what you learn about your company in that minute. That is your brand today.

I have been the customer in this situation many times. Running sourcing across more than 400 suppliers, I shortlisted companies I had never visited on the strength of what I could see online, and I passed over others that I later learned were excellent. Their factories were not the problem. Their websites told me nothing I could act on.

Going deeper: the customer's sixty seconds

I have done this search many times from the customer's chair. In the first minute on a supplier's website I am looking for five things, roughly in this order: do they make what I need, at the size and volume I need; do they look like a real, current business; has anyone I respect approved them; where are they; and how do I contact a person. If any of the five is missing, I move to the next tab. I do not email to ask.

60 sec
is about what a new supplier website gets

5 checks
product, credibility, approval, location, contact

0 emails
from customers who could not find the answer

Going deeper: who else is looking

Customers are not your only audience. The same pages are read by engineers checking capability, quality managers preparing an audit, potential employees deciding whether to apply, banks and investors forming a view, potential partners overseas, and journalists and trade bodies. A clear presence serves all of them at once, which is why it is one of the few investments that helps sales, recruitment and finance together.

Going deeper: cross-border customers

Distance raises the stakes. A customer in Germany considering a supplier in India, or an Indian vehicle maker considering a supplier in Italy or the UK, cannot drop in. They rely on what they can see: photographs of the plant, certificates, named standards, export experience and evidence that someone answers in good English within a day. If you want international customers, build the site for a reader who has never been to your country and may be reading in their second language.

= Worked example: two suppliers, one search

Illustrative. A customer searches for a machining supplier for aluminium housings.

	Supplier A	Supplier B
Home page headline	“Welcome to our website”	“Precision aluminium housings, 50 to 5,000 off”
Photographs	Stock images	Their own machines and parts
Certification	Mentioned in text, no date	Certificate shown, current
Contact	A form with twelve fields	Email, phone and drawing upload
Result	Tab closed	Enquiry sent

Supplier A may be the better factory. The customer will never find out.

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✎ Worksheet 1: The sixty-second test

Ask three people outside your company to look at your home page for one minute, then answer. Print or photocopy this page.

Question	Person 1	Person 2	Person 3
What does this company make?			
Who are its customers?			
What is it good at?			
Would you trust it? Why?			
How would you contact it?			
What was missing?			

? Questions to ask your newest customers

1. How did you first hear of us?
2. What did you look at before contacting us?
3. What nearly stopped you getting in touch?
4. What did our website not tell you?
5. Who else did you consider?
6. What would you tell another customer about us?

! Common objections

What you may hear	A straight answer
"Our customers know us. They do not need a website."	Your current contacts do. Their successors, and every new customer, will start online.
"We get all our work through referrals."	A referred customer still looks you up before calling. A weak presence quietly loses some of those referrals.
"Our industry is different."	Every industry says so. Engineers and purchasing teams search online in all of them.

✓ Myth and fact

✗ **MYTH** Industrial customers do not choose suppliers online.

✓ **FACT** They may not buy online, but they shortlist online. By the time the RFQ arrives, the decision on who looks credible has been made.

TIP OF THE DAY Ask a friend outside your industry to look at your home page for five seconds and tell you what you make.

✓ Your action tasks

- ■ Search for what you make, as a customer would describe it, and note where you appear.
- ■ Open your website on a phone for 60 seconds and write down what a stranger would learn.
- ■ Ask your three newest customers how they first found you.

General guidance only. Not legal, tax or financial advice.

■ Look at the websites of three competitors as a customer would.

FUN FACT

The word “brand” comes from an Old Norse word meaning “to burn”. Makers burned their mark into goods and livestock so that customers knew whose work it was.

Section 1 in one page

- Customers shortlist before they issue an RFQ.
- Your website gets about a minute.
- The same pages serve customers, auditors, recruits and partners.
- Distance makes online evidence more important.
- Find out what a stranger sees today.

Before **the RFQ is issued, the shortlist has already been made. Be on it.**

02
The capability gap

Why excellent factories present themselves poorly, the excuses that keep it that way, and a quick audit of where you stand.

In this section

- Why the gap exists
- Brand, for a manufacturer
- The ten-point presence audit
- What the gap costs
- Three kinds of manufacturer online
- Honest presentation
- Worked example: an audit score of 3
- **Worksheet 2: Presence audit**
- Questions to ask your management team
- Common objections, myth and fact, tip of the day, action tasks and fun facts
- Section 2 in one page

I have walked through plants with modern machines, disciplined quality systems and blue-chip customers, and then opened a website that was last touched years ago, with a stock photograph of a handshake on the home page. The gap between what the company can do and what it shows is what I call the capability gap. Closing it is the cheapest growth project a manufacturer can run.

Your presence audit score out of 10

0 to 4	5 to 7	8 to 10
Largely invisible	Underselling	Visible and credible

Why the gap exists

- **“Our work speaks for itself.”** It does, to the customers who have already seen it. Nobody else can hear it.
- **“We are engineers, not marketers.”** Good. Customers of engineered products want facts, and facts are what you have.

- **“Our customers are confidential.”** Then show sectors, processes, standards and anonymised results. There is always something you can say.
- **“We tried a website once.”** A site built once and abandoned is not a test of whether presence works.
- **“It is expensive.”** A clear, professional website and a steady LinkedIn presence cost less than one exhibition stand.

Brand, for a manufacturer

Brand is not a logo and it is not advertising. For a manufacturer, brand is the answer to a customer's three questions: what are you good at, can you prove it, and what will it be like to work with you? Everything in this guide serves one of those three.

> ***“The aim is for your online presence to be as good as your factory, not better.”***

The ten-point presence audit

Score one point for each statement that is true today.

- ■ A stranger can tell what we make and for whom within five seconds of opening our website.
- ■ The site shows real photographs of our factory, people and products.
- ■ Our certifications and approvals are visible with current dates.
- ■ We show at least three examples of work with a result.
- ■ The site works properly on a phone and loads quickly.
- ■ An enquiry can be sent in under two minutes, and we reply within one working day.
- ■ Our LinkedIn company page is complete and has posted in the last two weeks.
- ■ Our directors' LinkedIn profiles say clearly what the company does.
- ■ Our logo, colours and wording are the same on the website, LinkedIn, quotations and email signatures.
- ■ We know how many enquiries came through the website and LinkedIn last quarter.

Score	Where you are	What to do
8 to 10	Visible and credible	Sharpen positioning and proof (Sections 3 and 6), then build the content rhythm
5 to 7	Present but underselling	Fix the website basics first (Section 5), then LinkedIn
0 to 4	Largely invisible to new customers	Follow the 90-day plan in Section 10 from the start

CAPABILITY FIRST, ALWAYS

Branding does not replace capability and should never overstate it. The aim is for your online presence to be as good as your factory, not better. Customers visit eventually, and the visit must confirm what they saw.

Going deeper: what the gap costs

The cost of the capability gap is hard to see because it is made of things that did not happen: the enquiry that went elsewhere, the graduate who did not apply, the overseas partner who chose a competitor. One way to estimate it is to ask how many new customers you won last year who had never heard of you before. For many manufacturers the answer is close to none. That is the gap.

Closing the capability gap



Going deeper: three kinds of manufacturer online

Type	What it looks like	What customers conclude
The ghost	No site, or a holding page. No LinkedIn activity.	Too small, too old-fashioned or no longer trading
The brochure from 2012	A dated site listing machines. Stock photos. No proof.	Probably competent, hard to tell, not a priority
The visible specialist	Clear position, real photographs, proof, current activity.	Worth a conversation

Most capable manufacturers sit in the second row. Moving to the third is a matter of weeks, not years.

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Going deeper: honest presentation

There is a line between presenting yourself well and overstating. Do not show machines you do not own, customers you have not supplied, certificates you do not hold or capacity you cannot deliver. Do not use another company's photographs. Besides being wrong, it fails at the first audit, and in manufacturing the audit always comes. The strongest brands in engineering are built on understatement backed by evidence.

= Worked example: an audit score of 3

Illustrative. A fabrication company scores itself on the ten-point audit.

Statement	Score	First fix
Stranger understands us in five seconds	0	New headline from positioning statement
Real photographs	0	One-day shoot
Certifications visible and dated	1	None needed
Three examples of work	0	Write three case studies
Works on a phone	1	None needed
Enquiry in two minutes, reply in a day	0	Short form, shared inbox
LinkedIn page active	0	Complete page, start posting
Director profiles clear	0	Rewrite headlines
Consistent look	1	None needed
Enquiries measured	0	Add analytics and a log

Seven fixes, none of them expensive, and a clear order to do them in.

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Worksheet 2: Presence audit

Score 1 for true, 0 for not yet. Re-score every quarter. Print or photocopy this page.

Statement	Today	In 90 days	Action
Understood in five seconds			
Real photographs			
Certifications visible and dated			
Three examples of work with results			
Works well on a phone			
Enquiry in two minutes, reply in one day			
LinkedIn page complete and active			
Director profiles clear			
Consistent look everywhere			
Enquiries measured by source			
Total out of 10			

? Questions to ask your management team

1. How many new customers last year had never heard of us before?
2. When was our website last updated, and by whom?
3. What do we show that proves our capability?
4. Who is responsible for how we appear online?
5. What have we avoided saying because of confidentiality, and is that really necessary?
6. What would our best competitor's website tell a customer that ours does not?

! Common objections

What you may hear	A straight answer
"We are too busy with orders to work on this."	That is the best time. Presence built in good times fills the gaps in lean ones.
"We do not want competitors to see what we do."	They already know. Customers do not.
"Marketing is not for companies like ours."	Call it making your capability visible. It is the same discipline as a good quality manual: say what you do, and show the evidence.

✓ Myth and fact

✗ **MYTH** Good work speaks for itself.

✓ **FACT** Only to customers who have already seen it. Everyone else needs to be shown.

TIP OF THE DAY Run the audit on your nearest competitor too. The comparison is more persuasive than the score.

✓ Your action tasks

- ■ Score the ten-point presence audit with your management team.
- ■ Write down which of the five excuses you have used yourself.
- ■ List everything you could say publicly without naming a customer.
- ■ Choose the one person who will own your online presence.

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FUN FACT

One maker of ploughs and tractors has published a magazine for farmers since 1895. Manufacturers were doing content marketing long before the phrase existed.

Section 2 in one page

- The capability gap is the distance between what you can do and what you show.
- Brand answers three questions: what are you good at, can you prove it, what are you like to work with?
- Score the ten-point audit.
- Never overstate. The audit always comes.
- Closing the gap takes weeks, not years.

10 points

One audit, ten statements, a score you can improve every quarter.

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03

Positioning: what are you best at?

A manufacturer who claims to do everything is remembered for nothing. How to choose and state the thing you want to be known for.

In this section

- Four questions
- Write the positioning statement
- The fear of narrowing
- Three supporting messages
- Finding your position in your own data
- Positions manufacturers can own
- One company, several audiences
- Making it stick internally
- Worked example: from machine list to position
- **Worksheet 3: Positioning builder**
- Questions to ask two of your best customers
- Common objections, myth and fact, tip of the day, action tasks and fun facts
- Section 3 in one page

Ask a manufacturing owner what the company does and you often get a list of machines. Customers do not buy machine lists. They buy the confidence that a specific problem will be solved. Positioning is the work of deciding which problem, for which customer, you want to be the obvious answer to.

The positioning pattern

1	2	3	4
Who we help	What they want	What we make or do	Our proof

Four questions

1. **Who is our best customer?** Not everyone we could serve. The type of customer where we win most often and earn a fair margin.

2. **What do they come to us for?** The process, product or outcome they could not easily get elsewhere.
3. **What can we prove?** Certifications, years, volumes, tolerances, delivery record, named sectors.
4. **What do we do differently?** Design support, speed, a combination of processes under one roof, a location advantage, a cost base.

Write the positioning statement

Put the answers into one sentence using this pattern:

> **THE PATTERN**
> We help [type of customer] to [outcome they want] by [what we make or do], proven by [evidence].

Weak	Stronger
“A leading manufacturer of quality engineering solutions.”	“Precision-machined aluminium housings for commercial vehicle makers, in batches from 50 to 5,000, with IATF 16949 certification.”
“We offer a wide range of fabrication services.”	“Stainless steel fabrications for food and pharmaceutical equipment builders, designed, welded and finished under one roof.”
“Committed to excellence and customer satisfaction.”	“Interior systems for bus and rail builders, designed in Europe and manufactured in India to European standards.”

The stronger versions name the customer, the product, the range and the proof. A customer reading them knows in five seconds whether to keep reading. The examples are illustrative; use your own facts and only claim certifications you hold.

> ***“A company known for nothing in particular competes on price for everything.”***

The fear of narrowing

Owners worry that a clear position will turn other work away. It does the opposite. A company known for one thing is trusted with adjacent things. A company known for nothing in particular competes on price for everything. You can still take any order you like. Positioning only decides what you lead with.

Three supporting messages

Under the positioning statement, choose three messages you will repeat everywhere. Typically one about capability, one about reliability and one about how you work with customers. Each needs a fact behind it.

Message	Fact that supports it
Capability: what we can make	Processes, size and tolerance ranges, materials, in-house testing
Reliability: why we are a safe choice	Certifications, years trading, delivery and quality figures, long-standing customers
Partnership: what we are like to work with	Design-for-manufacture support, response times, a named contact, export experience

TEST IT ON A CUSTOMER

Read your positioning statement to two good customers and ask, “Is this why you buy from us?” They will correct it, and their words will be better than yours. Use them.

Going deeper: finding your position in your own data

Positioning is not invented in a workshop. It is discovered in your order book. List your customers from the last three years with sales, margin and how the work came to you. Mark the ones you would happily have ten more of. Look at what they have in common: sector, part type, size, volume, the problem they came with. That common ground is your position. The rest is work you can do, not work you should lead with.

Which customers to build your position on

Vertical: margin we earn. Horizontal: how often we win.

High	**Selective: quote with care**	**Core: lead with these**
Low	Decline politely	Volume: improve or reprice
	Hard	Easy

Going deeper: positions manufacturers can own

- **A process specialism.** The deepest capability in one process, material or size range.

- **A sector specialism.** Knowing one industry's standards, documents and expectations better than generalists.
- **A combination.** Several processes under one roof, removing coordination for the customer.
- **A service model.** Speed, small batches, design support or stockholding that larger rivals will not offer.
- **A geography.** A bridge between regions: European design with Indian manufacture, for example, or a local source for an overseas group.

Going deeper: one company, several audiences

If you serve two or three distinct sectors, keep one positioning statement for the company and write a short version for each sector that uses its language and standards. Give each a page on the website. A rail customer and a food-industry customer should each feel the page was written for them.

Going deeper: making it stick internally

Share the positioning statement with every employee. Ask them whether it is true. If the people who make the product do not recognise the description, customers will not either. When they do recognise it, they will repeat it, and that is how a position becomes a reputation.

= Worked example: from machine list to position

Illustrative. A subcontract machinist reviews three years of orders.

Finding	Implication
60% of margin comes from hydraulic manifolds	This is the specialism
Best customers are mobile-equipment makers	This is the audience
They value pressure testing in-house	This is the proof
Batches are typically 20 to 500	This is the range

Before: “Precision engineering to the highest standards.” After: “Hydraulic manifolds for mobile equipment makers, machined, deburred and pressure tested in-house, in batches from 20 to 500.”

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✎ Worksheet 3: Positioning builder

Complete each line with facts, then combine them. Print or photocopy this page.

Element	Our answer
Our best type of customer	
The outcome they want from us	
What we make or do for them	
What we can prove (numbers, certificates, years)	
What we do differently	
Our positioning statement in one sentence	
Supporting message 1 and its fact	
Supporting message 2 and its fact	
Supporting message 3 and its fact	

? Questions to ask two of your best customers

1. Why did you choose us originally?
2. Why do you still buy from us?
3. What do we do better than your other suppliers?
4. How would you describe us to a colleague?
5. What should we be telling people that we do not?
6. What would make you recommend us?

! Common objections

What you may hear	A straight answer
“We do not want to turn any work away.”	You will not. Positioning decides what you lead with, not what you accept.
“We are good at lots of things.”	Then choose the one that wins the best customers, and let the others follow it through the door.
“Our competitors all say the same as us.”	Which is the reason to say something specific. Numbers, ranges and named standards cannot be copied by a company that lacks them.

✓ Myth and fact

✗ **MYTH** A narrow position turns work away.

✓ **FACT** A company known for one thing is trusted with adjacent things. A company known for nothing competes on price for everything.

TIP OF THE DAY Borrow your customers' words. The phrase they use to describe you is usually your best headline.

✓ Your action tasks

- ■ Answer the four positioning questions in writing.
- ■ Draft your positioning statement using the pattern.
- ■ Read it to two good customers and note the words they use.
- ■ Choose your three supporting messages and the fact behind each.

General guidance only. Not legal, tax or financial advice.

FUN FACT

The idea of “positioning” was popularised by a 1981 book whose argument was that the battle is won in the customer's mind, not in the factory.

Section 3 in one page

- Position on what you win most often at a fair margin.
- Use the pattern: who, outcome, what, proof.
- Specific beats impressive.
- Three supporting messages, each with a fact.
- Test it on customers and on your own shop floor.

1 sentence

If you cannot say what you are best at in one sentence, a customer cannot repeat it to their manager.

04

Brand basics that build trust

Name, logo, colour, photography and tone. The few visual and verbal decisions to make once and apply everywhere.

In this section

- The one-page brand sheet
- Photography is the best money you will spend
- Words that work
- Apply it everywhere
- Briefing a photographer
- A house style in five rules
- Beyond the screen
- Brand and trade marks
- Worked example: a one-page brand sheet
- **Worksheet 4: Photography shot list**
- Questions to ask a designer or photographer you might hire
- Common objections, myth and fact, tip of the day, action tasks and fun facts
- Section 4 in one page

Manufacturers do not need elaborate brand books. They need a small set of decisions, made once, written on one page and applied without exception. Consistency is what reads as professional. A customer who sees the same name, mark and message on your website, your quotation and your packing label concludes that you are organised. That conclusion transfers to how they imagine your quality system.

1 page
is all your brand sheet needs

2 colours
one main, one accent

1 day
of photography changes everything

The one-page brand sheet

Element	Decide	Frugal guidance
Name and descriptor	The trading name and a five-word line saying what you do	Add the descriptor wherever the name alone does not explain the business
Logo	One main version, one single-colour version, minimum size and clear space	Simple and legible at small sizes. Refresh an old logo instead of replacing it if it has recognition
Colours	One main colour, one accent, plus black, white and a grey	Choose colours that work on screen, in print and on a machine guard
Typeface	One family for headings and text	A clean, widely available typeface. Readability over personality
Photography	A style: real, well lit, people at work, clean backgrounds	This is the element worth spending on
Tone of voice	Three words, such as clear, factual, helpful	Write as your best engineer explains things to a customer
Templates	Email signature, quotation, presentation, data sheet	Build once and lock them

Photography is the best money you will spend

Nothing changes a manufacturer's image faster than a day with a competent industrial photographer. Stock images tell the customer you had nothing of your own worth showing. Real images are the factory tour.

- Tidy the shop floor first. The camera sees everything.
- The building from outside, with signage.
- Each main process in operation, with people wearing correct protective equipment.
- Finished products, individually and in use if possible.
- Inspection and test equipment being used.
- The team: leadership, engineering, production, quality.
- Details that show care: labelled racks, gauges, packaging.
- A short video walk-through if budget allows. Two minutes is enough.

> ***“Consistency is what reads as professional.”***

Words that work

- Lead with what the customer gets, then how you do it.

- Use numbers where you have them: sizes, tolerances, volumes, years, people.
- Remove words any competitor could also claim: leading, world-class, innovative, solutions.
- Keep sentences short. Many of your readers use English as a second language, and many pages will be read through a translator.
- Write for the engineer and the purchasing manager both. One wants the specification, the other wants the assurance.

Apply it everywhere

Once the sheet exists, walk through every place a customer meets your company: website, LinkedIn, email signatures, quotations, drawings, delivery notes, packaging, vehicles, signage, exhibition stand. Bring each one into line as it comes up for renewal. It does not need to happen in a week. It needs to happen in one direction.

> **REFRESH, DO NOT REINVENT**
> If your company has traded for decades, the name and mark carry value. A careful tidy-up of the logo, a defined colour and new photography will modernise the brand without throwing away the recognition you have earned.

Going deeper: briefing a photographer

Good industrial photography comes from a good brief. Send the photographer your positioning statement and a shot list a week ahead. Walk the site together first. Schedule each area when it is running the most relevant job. Have a manager accompany them to move bins, straighten labels and check that protective equipment is correct. Ask for both wide and close shots, landscape and portrait, and for the full set of edited files with the right to use them anywhere. Tell your team what is happening and why; people photograph better when they are proud to be asked.

Where customers meet your brand



Going deeper: a house style in five rules

1. We use our logo only in its approved versions, never stretched or recoloured.
2. We use our main colour for headings and highlights, and our accent sparingly.
3. We use real photographs of our own site, people and products.

4. We write in short sentences, with numbers where we have them.
5. We use the same templates for quotations, presentations and data sheets.

Five rules fit on a card. Give one to anyone who produces a document, including outside agencies.

Going deeper: beyond the screen

Customers meet your brand in physical form too. Check the things an auditor or visitor sees: the sign at the gate, reception, visitor passes, workwear, labels on finished goods, packaging, delivery notes and vehicles. None needs to be expensive. All should carry the same name, mark and colour. A consistent label on a pallet in a customer's goods-in is advertising that costs nothing extra.

Going deeper: brand and trade marks

If your name and logo matter to you, ask an intellectual property adviser about registering them in the countries where you trade or plan to. It is their field, not mine, and it is usually far cheaper before a problem than after one.

= Worked example: a one-page brand sheet

Element	Illustrative decision
Name and descriptor	[Company name]. Aluminium gravity castings for pump makers.
Logo	Existing mark redrawn cleanly; one colour and reversed versions
Colours	Deep blue main, orange accent, dark grey text
Typeface	One clean sans-serif family for everything
Photography	Own foundry and people, natural light, tidy backgrounds
Tone	Clear, factual, helpful
Templates	Signature, quotation, data sheet, presentation

Illustrative.

Worksheet 4: Photography shot list

Tick each when captured. Add your own. Print or photocopy this page.

Shot	Where and when	Who is needed	Done
Building exterior with sign			
Each main process running			
Finished products, single and grouped			
Inspection and test in use			
Leadership team			
Shop-floor team at work			
Details: labels, gauges, packing			
Goods leaving the site			
Short walk-through video			

General guidance only. Not legal, tax or financial advice.

Questions to ask a designer or photographer you might hire

1. Which manufacturers or engineering firms have you worked for?
2. May we see a complete project, not only highlights?
3. What do you need from us to do this well?
4. What exactly will we receive, and in which formats?
5. Will we own the files and the right to use them anywhere?
6. What is the fixed price, and what would cost extra?

Common objections

What you may hear	A straight answer
“Our factory is not photogenic.”	Customers are not looking for beauty. They are looking for order, activity and care. A tidy working factory photographs well.
“We need a completely new logo.”	Rarely. A careful tidy-up keeps the recognition you have and costs far less.
“Brand guidelines are for big companies.”	A one-page sheet is enough, and it saves an argument every time someone makes a brochure.

Myth and fact

MYTH Branding means a new logo.

FACT For a manufacturer it means consistency, real photography and plain words. The logo is the smallest part.

TIP OF THE DAY Photograph on a normal working day with the factory tidy. Staged pictures look staged.

Your action tasks

- ■ Complete the one-page brand sheet.
- ■ Book a professional industrial photographer for one day.
- ■ Tidy the shop floor and brief your team before the shoot.
- ■ Update every email signature and quotation template to match.

General guidance only. Not legal, tax or financial advice.

FUN FACTS

- One of the oldest registered trade marks in the world is a plain red triangle used by a brewery. It was registered in 1876 and is still in use.
- One of the typefaces seen on countless machine plates and signs was designed in Switzerland in 1957 and is still in daily use.

Section 4 in one page

- Make a few decisions once and apply them everywhere.
- Consistency reads as professionalism.
- Real photography is the best money you will spend.
- Write plainly, with numbers.
- Check the physical touchpoints too.

1 day **with an industrial photographer changes how a manufacturer looks for the next three years.**

05

The website that wins enquiries

A page-by-page plan for a small, fast, credible manufacturer's website, and the mistakes that send customers away.

In this section

- The pages you need
- The home page, top to bottom
- Technical basics an owner should insist on
- What sends customers away
- Writing the pages
- Being found
- Working with a web designer
- The legal basics
- Worked example: a home page in words
- **Worksheet 5: Website page plan**
- Questions to ask a web designer before you appoint them
- Common objections, myth and fact, tip of the day, action tasks and fun facts
- Section 5 in one page

A manufacturer's website has one job: to turn a qualified visitor into an enquiry. It does not need to be large. A handful of well-made pages will outperform fifty thin ones. What it must be is clear, current, quick and easy to act on.

5 seconds
to say what you make and for whom

7 pages
are enough to win enquiries

2 minutes
to send you a drawing

The pages you need

Page	Purpose	Must include
Home	Tell a stranger what you do in five seconds	Positioning statement, a real photograph, three capability highlights, proof logos or certifications, a clear enquiry button
Capabilities or products	Let an engineer check the fit	Processes, materials, size and tolerance ranges, machine list, downloadable data sheet
Sectors	Show you understand their world	A short section per sector with relevant standards and examples
Quality and certifications	Remove doubt	Certificates with dates, inspection equipment, your approach to quality in plain words
Case studies	Prove it	Three to six short stories with a result (Section 6)
About	Show who they will deal with	History, facility, leadership with names and photographs, location and logistics
Contact or request a quote	Make acting easy	Short form with drawing upload, direct email, phone, address, response-time promise

The home page, top to bottom

1. Headline: your positioning statement in plain words.
2. One line of support and a button: “Request a quote” or “Send us a drawing”.
3. A real photograph or short video of your plant or product.
4. Three or four capability blocks with links.
5. Proof: certifications, sectors served, customer logos if permitted, key numbers.
6. One featured case study.
7. A closing invitation to get in touch, with the form or contact details.

> ***“A clear single page live this month beats a perfect site still being discussed next year.”***

Technical basics an owner should insist on

- **Mobile first.** Many first visits happen on a phone. Check every page on one.
- **Speed.** Compress images. A slow site is abandoned before it is read.
- **Search basics.** Each page has a clear title and description using the words a customer would search for: the process, the material, the product, the region.

- **Security and trust.** A secure connection, a privacy notice, company registration details and a real address.
- **Ownership.** The domain, hosting and site files are registered to your company, not to the designer.
- **Analytics.** Visits and enquiries are measured from day one (Section 9).
- **Easy updates.** Someone in your business can add a news item or case study without calling a developer.

What sends customers away

- A copyright date several years old, or a “latest news” item from long ago.
- Stock photographs and no real ones.
- Text about values and vision before any mention of what you make.
- No way to send a drawing.
- A contact form with fifteen fields.
- An enquiry that gets no reply for three days.

> **BUILD SMALL, LAUNCH, IMPROVE**
> A clear single-page site that is live this month does more for you than a perfect ten-page site that is still being discussed next year. Launch the essentials, then add a page or a case study each month.

Going deeper: writing the pages

Write each page for one reader with one question. The capabilities page is for an engineer asking “can they make my part?”, so lead with ranges and tolerances in a table, then the machine list. The quality page is for a quality manager asking “will they pass our audit?”, so show certificates, inspection equipment and how you handle non-conformance. The about page is for a senior customer asking “who are these people?”, so show names, faces and history. Put the answer at the top of each page and the detail below.

A home page that works, top to bottom



Going deeper: being found

- Use the words customers type: the process, the material, the product and the place. “Stainless steel fabrication” plus your region will be searched. “Bespoke engineered solutions” will not.
- Give every page its own clear title and a one-sentence description.
- Create a page for each main process and each sector, so each can be found on its own.
- Claim and complete your free business listing on the major search and map services.
- Ask customers, suppliers and trade bodies to link to your site.
- Publish something new each month. Search engines, like customers, notice whether anyone is home.

Going deeper: working with a web designer

Give the designer your positioning statement, brand sheet, photographs and written page content before they start. Most delays in web projects come from waiting for content from the client. Agree the page list, a fixed price, a timetable and who will make updates afterwards. Insist that the domain name and hosting are registered in your company's name, and that you hold the logins.

Going deeper: the legal basics

Websites that collect enquiries handle personal data. Ask your adviser what your site needs in the countries you serve: typically a privacy notice, clear consent for marketing emails, cookie information and your company details. I can tell you it matters. They can tell you what to write.

= Worked example: a home page in words

Block	Illustrative content
Headline	Stainless steel fabrications for food and pharmaceutical equipment builders
Support line and button	Designed, welded and finished under one roof. [Send us a drawing]
Image	Wide photograph of the fabrication hall in operation
Capability blocks	Design support / Fabrication and welding / Finishing / Inspection
Proof	Certificates, 32 years, 85 people, sectors served
Case study	Lead time cut from eight weeks to five for a process-plant builder
Closing	Talk to an engineer: name, direct line, email

Seven blocks, readable in under a minute, with a next step visible throughout.

Worksheet 5: Website page plan

Decide the purpose and owner of each page before any design starts. Print or photocopy this page.

Page	Reader and their question	Key content	Content owner	Ready ?
Home				
Capabilities or products				
Sectors				
Quality and certifications				
Case studies				
About				
Contact or request a quote				

Questions to ask a web designer before you appoint them

1. Which manufacturing sites have you built, and how do they perform?
2. Who writes the content?
3. What will the site be built on, and can we update it ourselves?
4. Who will own the domain and hosting?
5. How will it perform on a phone and on a slow connection?
6. What is included after launch, and at what cost?
7. How will enquiries be tracked?

Common objections

What you may hear	A straight answer
"We need lots of pages to look established."	Seven good pages look more established than forty thin ones.
"Let us wait until the new brochure is finished."	Build the website first. The brochure can be made from it in a day.
"We had the site redone five years ago."	Look at it on a phone today. Then look at your competitors'.

Myth and fact

MYTH A bigger website is a better website.

FACT Seven clear pages beat fifty thin ones. Customers want to find the answer quickly, not explore.

TIP OF THE DAY Put your phone number and email in the top corner of every page. Some customers simply want to call.

Your action tasks

- List the pages your site has today against the page plan.
- Rewrite your home page headline using your positioning statement.
- Check who legally owns your domain and hosting.

General guidance only. Not legal, tax or financial advice.

■ Time how long it takes to send an enquiry through your own site.

FUN FACT

The world's first website went live at a physics laboratory in 1991, and a copy of it can still be visited today. It was a single page of plain text explaining what the web was.

Section 5 in one page

- The website has one job: turn a qualified visitor into an enquiry.
- Seven pages are enough.
- One reader and one question per page.
- Use the words customers search for.
- Own your domain, launch small, improve monthly.

7 pages

Home, capabilities, sectors, quality, case studies, about, contact. That is a complete manufacturer's website.

General guidance only. Not legal, tax or financial advice.

06

Proof: certifications, case studies and numbers

Claims are free. Evidence wins orders. How to gather and present proof even when your customers are confidential.

In this section

- Your proof inventory
- The four-part case study
- When customers are confidential
- Keep proof honest and current
- Numbers that customers trust
- Asking for a testimonial
- Making audits work for you
- Proof for international customers
- Worked example: a case study in 120 words
- **Worksheet 6: Proof inventory**
- Questions to ask a customer when asking for a case study
- Common objections, myth and fact, tip of the day, action tasks and fun facts
- Section 6 in one page

Every supplier says they deliver quality on time at a competitive price. Customers have stopped hearing it. What they notice is evidence: something specific, checkable and relevant to their own situation. Most manufacturers have far more proof than they show.

The four-part case study

1	2	3	4
Customer and challenge	What we did	The result	In their words

Your proof inventory

Spend an hour with your quality and sales leads and list what you already hold under each heading.

Type of proof	Examples	How to show it
Third-party approval	Quality, environmental and sector certifications, customer approvals, audit results	Certificate images with dates, a downloadable pack
Numbers	Years trading, parts per year, on-time delivery, defect rates, people, floor area	A row of four key figures on the home page
Customers and sectors	Named customers where permitted, sectors and applications where not	Logo strip, or “supplier to three national bus builders”
Case studies	A problem solved, with a result	Short pages, each with a photograph
Testimonials	A sentence from a named customer contact	Beside the relevant capability
Equipment and facilities	Machines, inspection and test capability	Photographs and a current plant list
People	Qualifications, experience, long service	Team page and LinkedIn profiles

The four-part case study

A case study does not need to be long. Two hundred words and one photograph is enough if it follows this shape.

1. **The customer and the challenge.** Who they are, by sector if not by name, and what they needed.
2. **What we did.** The approach, in specifics: the process, the design change, the timescale.
3. **The result.** A number wherever possible: cost, weight, lead time, quality, volume.
4. **In their words.** One sentence from the customer, if they will give it.

> ***“Modest, exact and true is the tone to aim for.”***

General guidance only. Not legal, tax or financial advice.

When customers are confidential

- Describe the customer by type: “a European commercial vehicle manufacturer”.
- Show the process and the result without showing the part, or show a generic part.
- Ask anyway. Many customers who refuse a logo will approve an anonymised story.
- Check your contracts before publishing anything that could identify a customer or their product.

Keep proof honest and current

- Publish only figures you can support if asked during an audit.
- Date your certificates and replace them when they are renewed.
- Never borrow a group company's or partner's approval without saying whose it is.
- Review case studies yearly and retire the ones that have aged.

Customers verify. A single overstated claim discovered during a supplier audit undoes everything else you have shown. Modest, exact and true is the tone to aim for.

COLLECT PROOF AS YOU GO

Add one line to your project close-out routine: photograph the part, note the result, and ask the customer for a sentence. In a year you will have a dozen case studies without ever sitting down to write one.

Going deeper: numbers that customers trust

A number is persuasive when it is specific, current and sourced. “On-time delivery 97.4% over the last twelve months, measured against customer-requested date” is credible. “Excellent delivery performance” is not. Choose four figures that matter to your customers, state the period and how each is measured, and update them twice a year. If a figure is not yet good enough to publish, that is useful to know.

4 figures
on the home page, each with a period and a definition

200 words
and one photograph make a case study

1 hour
to send a complete supplier information pack

General guidance only. Not legal, tax or financial advice.

Going deeper: asking for a testimonial

Most satisfied customers are willing; they are simply never asked. Ask at a good moment, such as after a successful delivery or a passed audit. Make it easy by drafting a sentence for them to edit. Ask permission to use their name, job title and company, and offer the anonymous alternative if they hesitate. Keep the email in which they agreed.

Going deeper: making audits work for you

Customer and certification audits generate proof as a by-product. After each one, note what you may say publicly: that you were audited, by what kind of customer, and the outcome. Keep a current pack of certificates, policies and a facility overview ready to send. A supplier who can send a complete, tidy information pack within an hour of being asked has already demonstrated something about how they work.

Going deeper: proof for international customers

A customer in another country may not recognise your local customers or awards. Lead with what travels: international standards, global customer names where permitted, export destinations, test evidence, and photographs. State which languages your team works in and which time zones you cover. If you have supplied to their country before, say so on the page they will read.

= Worked example: a case study in 120 words

The customer and the challenge. A European maker of commercial-vehicle interiors needed a second source for a family of thirty brackets, with a lower landed cost and no drop in quality.

What we did. We reviewed the drawings, proposed one material change and a combined tool for six similar parts, produced samples in four weeks and supported the customer's validation.

The result. Landed cost reduced by 18%. First three production batches delivered with zero rejects. Lead time held at six weeks by sea.

In their words. “They questioned our drawing in a way that saved us money.” Purchasing manager.

The example is illustrative. Use your own facts and get the customer's approval.

✎ Worksheet 6: Proof inventory

List what you hold today under each heading, and whether you may publish it. Print or photocopy this page.

Type of proof	What we have	May we publish? (yes / anonymised / no)	Where it will go
Certifications and approvals			
Key numbers			
Customers and sectors			
Case studies			
Testimonials			
Equipment and facilities			
People and qualifications			
Export experience			

? Questions to ask a customer when asking for a case study

1. May we describe the project, anonymised if you prefer?
2. What mattered most to you about how it went?
3. Is there a result we can state: cost, time, quality?
4. Would you give us one sentence we can quote?
5. May we use your name and company, or only your job title?
6. Who else needs to approve this?

! Common objections

What you may hear	A straight answer
“Our customers will never agree.”	Some will not. Many agree to an anonymised version when asked directly.
“We have nothing special to show.”	A clean audit, a ten-year customer and a consistent delivery record are exactly what customers want to see.
“Publishing our figures is risky.”	Publish the ones you can stand behind. Being specific about a good number carries less risk than being vague.

✓ Myth and fact

✗ **MYTH** Our customers are confidential, so we have nothing to show.

✓ **FACT** You can show sectors, processes, standards, equipment, people and anonymised results. There is always something.

TIP OF THE DAY Ask for a testimonial on the day a customer thanks you. That is when the answer is yes.

✓ Your action tasks

- ■ Run the one-hour proof inventory with your quality and sales leads.
- ■ Choose four key numbers for your home page.
- ■ Write your first case study using the four-part shape.
- ■ Ask three customers for one sentence you may quote.

General guidance only. Not legal, tax or financial advice.

FUN FACTS

- “ISO” is not an abbreviation. The organisation says the name comes from the Greek “isos”, meaning equal, so that the short form is the same in every language.
- ISO 9001, the quality standard on most suppliers' walls, was first published in 1987.

Section 6 in one page

- Claims are free. Evidence wins orders.
- Run a one-hour proof inventory.
- Use the four-part case study.
- Anonymise when you must, but show something.
- Keep proof honest, dated and current.

4 parts

to every case study: the challenge, what you did, the result, and the customer's own words.

General guidance only. Not legal, tax or financial advice.

07

Your LinkedIn company page

Why LinkedIn is the manufacturer's trade show that never closes, and how to set up the company page and your own profile properly.

In this section

- Set up the company page
- Your own profile matters as much
- Build the audience deliberately
- What to expect
- A profile that works for the company
- Connection requests that get accepted
- Employees as ambassadors
- Launching a page from zero
- Messages and enquiries
- Worked example: rewriting a director's headline
- **Worksheet 7: LinkedIn set-up checklist**
- Questions to ask yourself each month
- Common objections, myth and fact, tip of the day, action tasks and fun facts
- Section 7 in one page

For business-to-business manufacturers, LinkedIn is where engineers, purchasing managers and directors keep their professional identity. It is where a customer goes after your website to check that your company is alive and who is behind it. It is also the one channel where a small manufacturer can reach a named decision maker at a large OEM without an introduction.

2003 the year LinkedIn launched	**1bn+** members worldwide	**15 min** a day is enough to build a presence

General guidance only. Not legal, tax or financial advice.

Set up the company page

- Logo sized correctly, and a banner image showing your product or plant with a short line of positioning.
- Tagline: the five-word descriptor, not a slogan.
- About section: positioning statement, capabilities, sectors, certifications, location, and how to enquire. Put the important words in the first two lines.
- Website link, industry, company size, headquarters and specialities all completed.
- A custom button pointing to your contact or quotation page.
- At least five posts published before you invite anyone, so the page does not look empty.
- All employees asked to link their profile to the page.
- Two administrators, so access is never lost when someone leaves.

Your own profile matters as much

People connect with people. A director's profile will usually get more attention than the company page, especially at the start. Treat your own profile and those of your sales and technical leads as part of the brand.

- A clear, recent photograph and a banner that matches the company page.
- A headline that says what you help customers do, not only your job title.
- An About section written in the first person: what the company makes, for whom, and how to reach you.
- The current role linked to the company page, with a short description of the business.
- Featured section showing the website, a brochure or a case study.

> ***"People connect with people. Your own profile is part of the brand."***

Build the audience deliberately

1. **Start with who you know.** Invite customers, suppliers, former colleagues and industry contacts to follow the page.
2. **Use your team.** Ask employees to follow, and to react to and share posts in the first hour. Early activity widens reach.
3. **Connect with purpose.** Each week, send a handful of personal connection requests to engineers and purchasing managers at target companies, with a short,

honest note.

4. **Join the conversation.** Comment usefully on posts by customers, trade bodies and industry media. A thoughtful comment is seen by their audience.
5. **Bring offline online.** After every exhibition, visit and meeting, connect the same day.

What to expect

Follower numbers grow slowly at first and that is normal. What matters is who follows, not how many. A page followed by three hundred engineers and purchasing managers in your sector is worth more than three thousand strangers. Enquiries from LinkedIn often arrive as a direct message to a director, months after the person first saw a post. Set a target, track it monthly, and judge it over quarters.

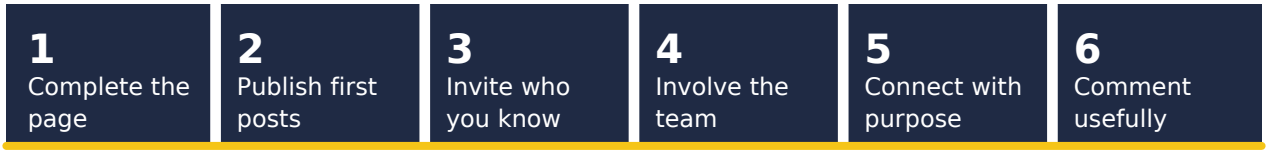
> **FIFTEEN MINUTES A DAY**
> LinkedIn rewards regular small effort over occasional bursts. Fifteen minutes each working day, split between posting, replying to comments and making a few new connections, is enough for most SME manufacturers to build a real presence within a year.

I launched a company page from nothing for a European bus and rail interiors manufacturer entering India. The plan was deliberately simple: publish a week of posts before inviting anyone, invite existing contacts personally in the first fortnight, post twice a day on a fixed timetable so the page was never quiet, and judge the first three months on who was following rather than how many.

Going deeper: a profile that works for the company

Your personal profile is often the first page a customer sees when they search for your name before a meeting. Rewrite three parts. The headline should say whom you help and with what, alongside your title. The About section should be four short paragraphs: what the company makes and for whom, what makes it different, a line of proof, and how to reach you. The Featured section should hold the website, a capability brochure and one case study. Ask your sales and technical leads to do the same.

Building an audience deliberately



Going deeper: connection requests that get accepted

A short, honest note works. Say who you are, why you are connecting and nothing more. For example: “Hello [name], we make [product] for [type of company]. I follow [their company]'s work on [topic] and would be glad to connect.” Do not pitch in the request. Do not send the same message to a hundred people. A handful of considered requests each week builds a better network than a campaign.

Going deeper: employees as ambassadors

The combined network of your employees is far larger than the company page's following. Invite them, without pressure, to follow the page and to share posts they are proud of. Give them good photographs of their own work to share. Recognise people in posts. A welder sharing a picture of a finished job reaches other engineers in a way no company announcement does.

Going deeper: launching a page from zero

I launched a company page from nothing for a European manufacturer entering India. What worked was publishing a week of posts before inviting anyone, inviting existing contacts personally in the first fortnight, posting on a fixed timetable so the page was never quiet, and judging the first three months on who followed, not how many.

Going deeper: messages and enquiries

Treat a LinkedIn message from a potential customer like an email enquiry. Reply within a day, move the conversation to a call or an email with a drawing, and log it with its source.

= Worked example: rewriting a director's headline

Before	After
Managing Director at [Company]	Managing Director, [Company] | Precision aluminium housings for commercial vehicle makers | 50 to 5,000 off
Sales Manager	Helping pump makers source machined castings with shorter lead times | Sales Manager, [Company]
Quality Manager	Quality Manager, [Company] | Keeping aerospace and rail customers audit-ready

Each “after” version tells a searching customer what the company does without opening the profile.

Worksheet 7: LinkedIn set-up checklist

Tick when complete. Assign a name to anything outstanding. Print or photocopy this page.

Item	Done	Owner	Notes
Logo and banner			
Tagline and About section			
Website, industry, size, location, specialities			
Custom button to contact page			
Five posts published			
Two page administrators			
Director profiles rewritten			
Employees linked to the page			
First 100 contacts invited			
Weekly connection routine in the diary			

? Questions to ask yourself each month

1. Who followed us this month, and are they the right people?
2. Which post brought profile views or messages?
3. Which target companies are we now connected to?
4. Did we reply to every comment and message within a day?
5. Who in the team could we feature next?
6. What did we learn from a competitor's page?

! Common objections

What you may hear	A straight answer
"I am not comfortable posting about myself."	Post about the work, the product and the team. That is what customers want to see.
"Our customers are not on LinkedIn."	Search for their engineers and purchasing managers by company name. You may be surprised.
"We posted for a month and nothing happened."	A month is the warm-up. Judge it over three quarters, by who is following and what they say when they enquire.

✓ Myth and fact

✗ **MYTH** LinkedIn is for job seekers.

✓ **FACT** It is where engineers, purchasing managers and directors keep their professional identity, and where they check yours.

TIP OF THE DAY Reply to every comment on your posts within a day. The reply is seen by the commenter's network too.

✓ Your action tasks

- ■ Complete every field of your company page using the checklist.
- ■ Rewrite your own headline to say what you help customers do.
- ■ Ask all employees to link their profile to the page.
- ■ Send ten personal connection requests to engineers or customers at target companies this week.

FUN FACTS

- LinkedIn launched in May 2003, which makes it older than most of the social networks people use today.
- LinkedIn now counts more than one billion members in over 200 countries and territories.

Section 7 in one page

- LinkedIn is the trade show that never closes.
- Complete the page before inviting anyone.
- Your own profile is part of the brand.
- Build the audience from people you know.
- Fifteen minutes a day, every working day.

15 min **a day, split between posting, replying and connecting, builds a real presence within a year.**

08

A simple monthly content plan

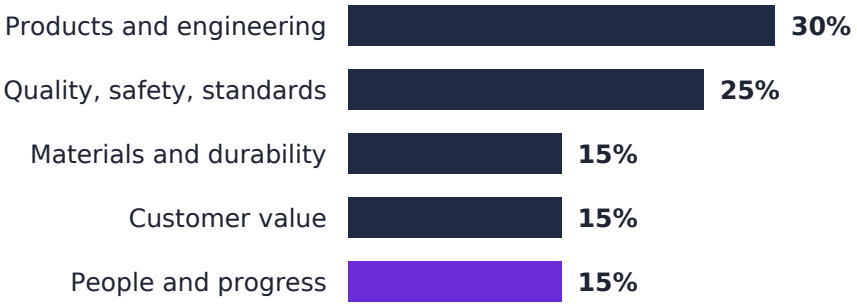
What to post, how often, and a themed weekly rhythm that means you never start from a blank page.

In this section

- Content pillars
- Themed days
- How often
- Formats that work for manufacturers
- Write a post in ten minutes
- The monthly routine
- Thirty post ideas you already have
- Three templates
- Tone
- What not to post
- Worked example: one week of posts
- **Worksheet 8: One-month content calendar**
- Questions to ask your team when planning content
- Common objections, myth and fact, tip of the day, action tasks and fun facts
- Section 8 in one page

The reason most company pages go quiet is not lack of time. It is the blank page. Nobody knows what to post this week, so nothing is posted. The cure is a plan that decides in advance what kind of post goes out on which day, so that the only question left is which example to use.

A content mix for engineering-led manufacturers



Shares of posts. Adjust to your own business.

Content pillars

Choose four or five pillars: the subjects you want to be known for. Give each a rough share of your posts. This is a mix I use for engineering-led manufacturers; adjust the shares to your own business.

Pillar	Share	What goes in it
Products and engineering	30%	How a product or process works, design details, new capabilities, behind-the-scenes manufacturing
Quality, safety and standards	25%	Testing, certification, compliance, how you check what you make
Materials and durability	15%	Material choices, life testing, why something lasts
Customer value	15%	Case studies, cost and lead-time results, problems solved
People and progress	15%	Team, training, apprentices, investment, exhibitions, milestones

Themed days

Give each posting day a name and a format. It makes planning quick, helps followers know what to expect, and gives your team a reason to contribute. For example:

General guidance only. Not legal, tax or financial advice.

Day	Theme	Typical post
Monday	Systems or products	One product explained in a photograph and four lines
Tuesday	Technology	A process, a machine or a design feature
Wednesday	Works in progress	A job on the shop floor today
Thursday	Testing	A test, an inspection method or a standard explained
Friday	Facts	One number or one myth corrected

> ***"Document, do not create. Your factory produces content every shift."***

How often

For an SME starting out, two or three good posts a week is a sound base. Consistency matters more than volume. If you have the material and the people, daily posting during a launch period builds an audience faster. Whatever you choose, choose a pace you can hold for a year.

Formats that work for manufacturers

- **A real photograph with a short explanation.** The most reliable format there is.
- **Short video.** Thirty to sixty seconds of a process running. Phones are good enough.
- **Document posts.** A few slides explaining a process or a checklist.
- **Before and after.** A part, a layout, a result.
- **People.** A new starter, a long-service award, an apprentice's first job. These often get the widest reach.

Write a post in ten minutes

1. First line: the point, stated plainly, so it earns the click to read more.
2. Three or four short lines of substance: what it is, why it matters to a customer, one specific fact.
3. A closing line that invites action: ask a question, offer the data sheet, or point to the website.

4. A real image. Three to five relevant hashtags. Tag people and companies only when they are involved.

The monthly routine

- One hour at the start of the month: fill a simple calendar with a topic for each posting day.
- Batch the photographs in one walk around the factory.
- Write the posts in one or two sittings and schedule them.
- Ten minutes a day to reply to every comment and message.
- At month end, note the three posts that did best and plan more like them.

> **DOCUMENT, DO NOT CREATE**
> You do not have to invent content. Your factory produces it every day: a first-off inspection, a new fixture, a delivery leaving the yard. Photograph what is already happening and explain it in plain words.

Going deeper: thirty post ideas you already have

- A job on the machine today, and what makes it interesting.
- A before-and-after of a part, a layout or a process.
- How you check a critical dimension.
- A new machine, fixture or gauge, and why you bought it.
- A material you work with, and when to choose it.
- A common design mistake that adds cost, and how to avoid it.
- A standard explained in plain words.
- A delivery leaving the yard, and where it is going.
- A new starter, an apprentice, a long-service milestone.
- A supplier you value, and why.
- A question customers often ask, answered.
- What you learned at an exhibition.
- A certificate renewed or an audit passed.
- A number: parts made this year, kilometres shipped, years in business.
- A problem you solved for a customer, anonymised.

15 ideas	3 a week	1 hour
already happening on your shop floor	is a sound starting pace	a month to plan the calendar

That is fifteen. Each can be done a second time from a different angle, which makes thirty: more than a month of posts at three a week.

Going deeper: three templates

Type	Structure
The explainer	What this is. Why it matters to you as a customer. One specific fact. Ask us for the data sheet.
The story	The customer needed X. The difficulty was Y. We did Z. The result was a number.
The people post	Meet [name]. What they do. One thing they are proud of. A thank-you.

Going deeper: tone

Write as you would speak to a customer walking round your factory. Be specific and modest. Avoid exclamation marks, hashtags by the dozen and announcements that you are “thrilled”. Let the work impress. If a post teaches an engineer something useful in thirty seconds, it has done its job, whether or not it is widely liked.

Going deeper: what not to post

- Customer parts or drawings without permission.
- Anything that reveals a customer's volumes, prices or plans.
- Photographs showing unsafe practice or missing protective equipment.
- Comment on politics or on competitors.

= Worked example: one week of posts

Day	Theme	Post
Monday	Products	Photograph of a finished assembly, four lines on what it does and for whom
Wednesday	Works in progress	Short video of a part being machined, one line on the tolerance held
Thursday	Testing	How we pressure test every unit, with a picture of the rig
Friday	Facts	“6,214 units shipped this year with zero returns.” One line of thanks to the team

Four posts, written in under an hour, all from things that were already happening.

Worksheet 8: One-month content calendar

Fill in a topic for each slot. Note who supplies the photograph. Print or photocopy this page.

Week	Post 1: topic and pillar	Post 2: topic and pillar	Post 3: topic and pillar	Photos by
Week 1				
Week 2				
Week 3				
Week 4				

? Questions to ask your team when planning content

1. What are we making this month that we are proud of?
2. What question did a customer ask recently?
3. What have we improved on the shop floor?
4. Who deserves recognition?
5. What is coming up: an audit, a show, a delivery, a milestone?
6. Which post last month got the best response, and why?

! Common objections

What you may hear	A straight answer
“We have nothing interesting to say.”	What is routine to you is unfamiliar and useful to a customer or a young engineer.
“It takes too long.”	An hour a month to plan, an hour to write, ten minutes a day to reply.
“Nobody will read it.”	The right fifty people reading it is the goal. One of them is choosing a supplier this year.

✓ Myth and fact

✗ **MYTH** You need a marketing team to post regularly.

✓ **FACT** You need a phone, a factory and fifteen minutes a day. Your shop floor produces content every shift.

TIP OF THE DAY Take five photographs every Monday morning. By Friday you will have used at least three.

✓ Your action tasks

- ■ Choose your content pillars and their shares.
- ■ Name your themed days.
- ■ Walk the factory and take 20 photographs for the month ahead.
- ■ Write and schedule your first week of posts.

General guidance only. Not legal, tax or financial advice.

FUN FACTS

- One of the world's best-known restaurant guides was first published in 1900 by a tyre maker, to give motorists more reasons to drive and so wear out more tyres.
- A famous book of world records began in 1955 as a brewery's giveaway to settle pub arguments.

Section 8 in one page

- Decide in advance what kind of post goes out when.
- Four or five content pillars keep you on message.
- Themed days end the blank page.
- Consistency beats volume.
- Document what is already happening.

30 posts

Fifteen everyday shop-floor moments, each told twice from a different angle, fill more than a month.

General guidance only. Not legal, tax or financial advice.

09
From visitor to enquiry

Making it easy to enquire, answering fast, and measuring the few numbers that tell you whether your brand is working.

In this section

- Make the next step obvious
- Answer fast and well
- Keep a simple pipeline
- The numbers to watch
- Ask every new contact one question
- The enquiry form and the download offer
- The first reply
- Qualifying politely
- Nurturing the not-yet
- Worked example: a first reply
- **Worksheet 9: Enquiry log**
- Questions to ask every new contact
- Common objections, myth and fact, tip of the day, action tasks and fun facts
- Section 9 in one page

Attention is not the goal. Enquiries are. A manufacturer can have a handsome website and an active LinkedIn page and still lose business in the last step, because the form is awkward, the reply is slow, or nobody knows where the enquiry came from.

From visitor to order



Make the next step obvious

- Put one clear call to action on every page: “Request a quote”, “Send us a drawing” or “Talk to an engineer”.

- Keep the form short: name, company, email, what they need, and a file upload. Ask for everything else later.
- Offer a direct email address and a phone number for people who dislike forms.
- Say what happens next: “We reply within one working day.” Then do it.
- Offer something useful in exchange for contact details: a capability brochure, a design guide, a data sheet.

Answer fast and well

Speed of response is the easiest competitive advantage in manufacturing, because so few suppliers have it. An acknowledgement within hours, with a named person and a realistic date for the quotation, tells the customer what working with you will be like.

1. Route every web and LinkedIn enquiry to a shared inbox with a named owner each day.
2. Acknowledge the same day, personally, not with an automatic reply alone.
3. Ask any clarifying questions at once, in one message.
4. Quote by the date you promised, or say before that date that you need longer.
5. Follow up once after a week and once after three. Then leave the door open.

> ***“Speed of response is the easiest competitive advantage in manufacturing.”***

Keep a simple pipeline

A spreadsheet is enough to begin. One row per enquiry: date, company, contact, what they asked for, source, value, status, next action and date. Review it weekly. The source column, which records whether the enquiry came from search, LinkedIn, a referral or an exhibition, is the one that tells you where to put your effort.

The numbers to watch

Measure	Where to find it	What it tells you
Website visitors and where they came from	Your analytics tool	Whether you are being found, and through which channels
Most-visited pages	Analytics	What customers care about. Improve those pages first
Enquiries per month, by source	Your pipeline sheet	The real output of the whole effort
Visitor-to-enquiry rate	Enquiries divided by visitors	Whether the site persuades people to act
Response time	Pipeline sheet	Whether you are wasting the enquiries you earn
Quotes and orders from new contacts	Pipeline sheet	Whether the enquiries are the right ones
LinkedIn followers, by job function and sector	Page analytics	Whether you are reaching purchasing managers and engineers or only peers
Post reach and engagement	Page analytics	Which subjects and formats to repeat

Review these once a month in fifteen minutes. Look at the trend over a quarter, not the week. Brand building for a manufacturer is slow at first and then steady: the customer who enquires in month nine first noticed you in month two.

Ask every new contact one question

“How did you find us?” Record the answer. It is the most useful market research you can do, and it costs nothing.

> **THE LEAK CHECK**
> Once a quarter, send an enquiry through your own website from a personal email address. Time how long the reply takes and read it as a customer would. Then do the same to two competitors.

Going deeper: the enquiry form and the download offer

The best way to learn who is interested is to offer something worth their contact details. A capability brochure, a design guide or a practical checklist works well. Ask only for what you need: name, company and email. If you plan to post a printed copy, add an optional address field. Make it clear what they will receive and how you will use their details, and ask your adviser about the consent wording and privacy notice your markets require. Send the download automatically, and follow up personally within a few days with a useful note, not a sales pitch.

An illustrative month online



Going deeper: the first reply

The first reply sets the tone for the relationship. Send it the same day. Use the person's name, thank them, confirm what you understood, ask any questions in a single list, name the person who will handle the enquiry and say when the quotation will arrive. Attach your information pack. That reply takes five minutes and puts you ahead of most competitors.

Going deeper: qualifying politely

Not every enquiry fits. Decide in advance what you are best suited to, by part type, volume and sector, and say so kindly when something falls outside it. A prompt, honest “this is not our strength, but here is who might help” is remembered, and often returns later as the right kind of enquiry.

Going deeper: nurturing the not-yet

Most first contacts are not ready to buy. Keep a simple list of everyone who has enquired or downloaded something, and send a short, useful update a few times a year: a new capability, a case study, a guide. Connect with them on LinkedIn so that your regular posts keep you in view. When their need arises, you are the supplier they have been hearing from.

= Worked example: a first reply

“Dear [Name], thank you for your enquiry this morning. I understand you need 400 stainless brackets to the attached drawing, delivered to your plant by the end of March. Two questions so we can quote accurately: is the surface finish on the inside face critical, and would you accept delivery in two lots? I will handle this personally and you will have our quotation by Thursday. Our information pack is attached. My direct line is below. Kind regards, [name].”

Illustrative. It is specific, personal, dated, and it took five minutes to write.

Worksheet 9: Enquiry log

One row per enquiry. Review weekly. Print or photocopy this page.

Date	Company and contact	What they need	Source	Value	Status	Next action and date

Questions to ask every new contact

1. How did you find us?
2. What made you get in touch now?
3. What matters most to you in a supplier for this?
4. When do you need to decide?
5. Who else is involved in the decision?
6. May we keep you informed of new capabilities?

Common objections

What you may hear	A straight answer
“We only want serious enquiries, so a long form filters people.”	It filters out busy, senior customers first. Qualify in the conversation, not on the form.
“We reply when we have the quotation ready.”	Acknowledge the same day, quote on the promised day. Silence reads as disinterest.
“We cannot measure where enquiries come from.”	Ask every new contact one question and write down the answer. That is enough to start.

Myth and fact

MYTH More website traffic means more business.

FACT Enquiries come from making it easy to act and answering fast. Many manufacturers lose the order after the visitor has already decided to enquire.

TIP OF THE DAY Set an alert on the enquiry inbox to your own phone for the first month. You will learn how fast you really respond.

Your action tasks

- Put one clear call to action on every page of your site.
- Cut your enquiry form to five fields and a file upload.
- Set up a shared enquiry inbox with a named owner each day.

General guidance only. Not legal, tax or financial advice.

■ Create the pipeline sheet with a source column, and start asking “how did you find us?”

FUN FACT

The first network email was sent in 1971 by an engineer who also chose the @ sign to separate the name from the machine. He later said he could not remember what the message said.

Section 9 in one page

- Enquiries, not attention, are the goal.
- One clear call to action on every page.
- Acknowledge the same day, personally.
- Log every enquiry with its source.
- Stay in touch with the not-yet.

Same day

A personal acknowledgement within hours is the easiest advantage in manufacturing, because so few suppliers offer it.

10
Your 90-day brand plan

A practical three-month plan, a budget checklist and how to decide what to do in-house and what to buy in.

In this section

- Who does what
- Budget checklist
- Choosing outside help
- What good looks like at day 90
- After the first 90 days
- The launch checklist
- The first year after launch
- Budgeting sensibly
- Brand and your wider plans
- Worked example: a launch announcement
- **Worksheet 10: Our 90-day brand plan**
- Questions to ask yourself on day 90
- Common objections, myth and fact, tip of the day, action tasks and fun facts
- Section 10 in one page

Everything in this guide can be put in place in about three months alongside the day job, if one person owns it and the owner of the business gives it an hour a week. Here is the order I recommend.

Your 90 days

1	2	3
Month 1: Foundations	Month 2: Build	Month 3: Launch and rhythm

Month	Focus	What gets done	Result
1	Foundations	Presence audit. Positioning statement and three messages, tested on customers. One-page brand sheet. Proof inventory. Photography day.	You know what you are saying and you have real images to say it with
2	Build	Website written and built on the page plan. Three case studies. Enquiry form, shared inbox and analytics in place. LinkedIn company page and director profiles completed.	A credible site live, and a page ready for followers
3	Launch and rhythm	Invite contacts to follow. Start the content plan. Announce the new site. Email customers and prospects. Set up the pipeline sheet and monthly review.	Regular posting, first measured enquiries, a routine that continues

Who does what

Task	Keep in-house	Consider buying in
Positioning and messages	Yes. Only you know what you are best at	A facilitator, if the team cannot agree
Technical content and case studies	The facts and the stories	A writer to turn notes into clear copy
Photography and video	Day-to-day phone pictures	A professional for the core image library
Website design and build	Decisions and approvals	A designer or agency who has built for manufacturers
LinkedIn posting	Ideas, images and replies to comments	Scheduling and editing support
Enquiry handling	Always	Never

Budget checklist

Costs vary by country and supplier, so put your own figures against each line. None of them need be large.

- Photography and short video: one day, plus editing.
- Logo tidy-up and one-page brand sheet.
- Website design, build and copywriting.
- Domain, hosting and security certificate, annually.

- Templates: quotation, presentation, data sheets, email signatures.
- Monthly support for LinkedIn content, if not done in-house.
- A small monthly amount for promoted posts once the basics are working. Optional.
- Your team's time: around two to three hours a week.

> ***"What takes years is the reputation, and that you already have."***

Choosing outside help

- Ask to see work they have done for manufacturers or engineering firms, not consumer brands.
- Agree a fixed scope and price, with the pages and deliverables listed.
- Insist that the domain, hosting, site files and page access belong to your company.
- Avoid long tie-ins. A good supplier keeps you by doing good work.
- Check that you can update the site yourselves afterwards.

What good looks like at day 90

- Presence audit score of 8 or more.
- A stranger understands what you make within five seconds on your home page.
- Real photography throughout, with at least three case studies live.
- Company page complete, posting to plan, with a growing following in your target sectors.
- Every enquiry acknowledged the same working day and logged with its source.
- A monthly fifteen-minute review in the diary.

After the first 90 days

Add one case study a month. Refresh the photography once a year. Review positioning annually with two customers. Extend the site with a page for each new sector or market you enter. If you are a UK or European manufacturer looking towards India, or an Indian manufacturer looking towards Europe, add a page that speaks to that customer directly, in their terms and with their standards.

START THIS WEEK

Run the ten-point audit with your management team. Write the first draft of your positioning statement. Book the photographer. Those three steps cost little and make everything after them easier.

Going deeper: the launch checklist

- Every page read aloud by someone who did not write it.
- Every page checked on a phone.
- The enquiry form tested, with the message arriving in the shared inbox.
- Analytics recording visits and enquiries.
- Privacy notice and company details in place, as advised.
- Certificates current and dated.
- Email signatures updated with the new address and look.
- LinkedIn page and director profiles consistent with the site.
- A launch post and a short email to customers and contacts prepared.

Where the first 90 days go

Month 1	Month 2	Month 3
Foundations	Build	Launch and rhythm

Going deeper: the first year after launch

Quarter	Focus	Result to aim for
1	Launch and settle the rhythm	Posting to plan, every enquiry logged
2	Add proof	Six case studies, testimonials on key pages
3	Extend	A page for each sector or export market; a downloadable guide
4	Review	Re-run the audit, refresh the photographs, set next year's targets

General guidance only. Not legal, tax or financial advice.

Going deeper: budgeting sensibly

Think of presence as a small, permanent line in the budget, not a one-off project. After the initial build, the continuing cost is modest: hosting, an annual photography top-up, some hours of content support and your team's time. Compare the total with the cost of a single exhibition, or with the margin on one new customer, and it is easy to justify. Set it once and stop debating it each year.

Going deeper: brand and your wider plans

A visible, credible presence supports more than sales. It helps when you look for a distributor or joint venture partner abroad, when you recruit, and when you speak to a bank or investor, because each of them looks you up first. If growth, partnership or investment is on your horizon, treat your online presence as part of getting ready.

= Worked example: a launch announcement

“We have a new website. It shows, more clearly than before, what we make: stainless steel fabrications for food and pharmaceutical equipment builders, designed, welded and finished under one roof. You will find our capabilities, certificates and some recent projects there, and you can now send us a drawing directly from any page. Thank you to the customers who allowed us to share their stories, and to our team, who appear throughout. [link]”

Illustrative. Short, factual, generous to others, and it tells the reader what they can now do.

Worksheet 10: Our 90-day brand plan

Names and dates against each block. Print or photocopy this page.

Month	What we will do	Owner	In-house or bought in	Budget	Done?
1: Foundations					
2: Build					
3: Launch and rhythm					

? Questions to ask yourself on day 90

1. What is our audit score now?
2. Can a stranger say what we make after five seconds?
3. How many enquiries came through the site and LinkedIn?
4. Is every enquiry answered the same day?
5. Is the content rhythm running without me?
6. What will we add next quarter?

! Common objections

What you may hear	A straight answer
"We will do it properly next year."	A simple version this quarter starts earning now and can be improved as you go.
"It is hard to prove the return."	Log enquiries by source for a year. The evidence builds quietly.
"We do not have anyone to own it."	Choose a person who cares how the company is seen, give them two hours a week, and support them.

✓ Myth and fact

✗ **MYTH** Building a brand is expensive and takes years.

✓ **FACT** The basics take about 90 days and cost less than one exhibition stand. What takes years is the reputation, and that you already have.

TIP OF THE DAY Launch before you feel ready. A live site can be improved; a draft cannot win an enquiry.

✓ Your action tasks

- ■ Put the three-month plan in the diary with a named owner.
- ■ Fill in the budget checklist with your own figures.
- ■ Decide what you will do in-house and what you will buy in.
- ■ Book the photographer, and book the day-90 review.

General guidance only. Not legal, tax or financial advice.

FUN FACT

One of the world's most recognised script logos was drawn in the 1880s by the company's bookkeeper and has barely changed since. Consistency, held for long enough, becomes the brand.

Section 10 in one page

- Three months, one owner, an hour a week from you.
- Foundations, then build, then launch.
- Keep positioning and enquiry handling in-house.
- Own your domain and your files.
- Start this week: audit, positioning draft, photographer.

90 days

from audit to a live site, an active page and a routine that keeps going.

General guidance only. Not legal, tax or financial advice.

The book in two pages

Every section in one line, with the number to remember. Pin these two pages up.

Section	The point	Remember
1. Customers judge you online first	Customers shortlist before they issue an RFQ.	**Before**: the RFQ is issued, the shortlist has already been made. Be on it.
2. The capability gap	The capability gap is the distance between what you can do and what you show.	**10 points**: One audit, ten statements, a score you can improve every quarter.
3. Positioning: what are you best at?	Position on what you win most often at a fair margin.	**1 sentence**: If you cannot say what you are best at in one sentence, a customer cannot repeat it to their manager.
4. Brand basics that build trust	Make a few decisions once and apply them everywhere.	**1 day**: with an industrial photographer changes how a manufacturer looks for the next three years.
5. The website that wins enquiries	The website has one job: turn a qualified visitor into an enquiry.	**7 pages**: Home, capabilities, sectors, quality, case studies, about, contact. That is a complete manufacturer's website.
6. Proof: certifications, case studies and numbers	Claims are free. Evidence wins orders.	**4 parts**: to every case study: the challenge, what you did, the result, and the customer's own words.
7. Your LinkedIn company page	LinkedIn is the trade show that never closes.	**15 min**: a day, split between posting, replying and connecting, builds a real presence within a year.
8. A simple monthly content plan	Decide in advance what kind of post goes out when.	**30 posts**: Fifteen everyday shop-floor moments, each told twice from a different angle, fill more than a month.
9. From visitor to enquiry	Enquiries, not attention, are the goal.	**Same day**: A personal acknowledgement within hours is the easiest advantage in manufacturing, because so few suppliers offer it.
10. Your 90-day brand plan	Three months, one owner, an hour a week from you.	**90 days**: from audit to a live site, an active page and a routine that keeps going.

General guidance only. Not legal, tax or financial advice.

My action plan

Choose one action from each section, give it an owner and a date, and review the page monthly. Print or photocopy this page.

Section	My one action	Owner	By when	Done
1. Customers judge you online first				
2. The capability gap				
3. Positioning: what are you best at?				
4. Brand basics that build trust				
5. The website that wins enquiries				
6. Proof: certifications, case studies and numbers				
7. Your LinkedIn company page				
8. A simple monthly content plan				
9. From visitor to enquiry				
10. Your 90-day brand plan				

General guidance only. Not legal, tax or financial advice.

Glossary

Term	Meaning
About section	The summary text on a LinkedIn profile or company page.
Analytics	Tools that measure visits to your website and what visitors do.
Brand	For a manufacturer: what you are good at, the proof, and what you are like to work with.
Brand sheet	A one-page record of your name, logo, colours, typeface, photography style and tone.
Call to action	The next step you invite a visitor to take, such as “Send us a drawing”.
Capability gap	The distance between what a company can do and what it shows.
Case study	A short account of a customer problem solved, with a result.
Company page	Your organisation's profile on LinkedIn.
Content pillar	A subject you post about regularly.
Conversion	A visitor taking the action you wanted, such as sending an enquiry.
Domain	Your website address. It should be registered in your company's name.
Engagement	Reactions, comments and shares on a post.
Positioning	The specific thing you want to be known for, and by whom.
Proof	Evidence a customer can check: certificates, numbers, customers, case studies.
Reach	The number of people who saw a post.
RFQ	Request for quotation.
Search optimisation	Making pages easy for search engines, and so customers, to find.
Testimonial	A customer's own words about working with you.

Useful organisations and resources

Organisations and events worth knowing. Listed for reference only; no endorsement is implied, and none of them has reviewed this guide.

Organisation or resource	Why it is useful
LinkedIn's own help pages for company pages	Step-by-step guidance on setting up and running a page.
Free search and analytics tools from the major search engines	To see how you are found and what visitors do.
Free business listings on search and map services	Claim yours and keep it current.
Your national intellectual property office	For registering names and logos in each market where you trade.
Your national data protection regulator	Guidance on privacy notices, consent and marketing emails.
Your trade association	Many offer member directories, awards and case-study opportunities that add proof.

For anything involving law, tax, customs, employment, data protection or investment, use a qualified adviser in the relevant country.

Your next step

If the audit in Section 2 gave you a score you did not like, you are in good company, and it is quick to fix.

A free presence review

Send me your website address and your LinkedIn company page. I will look at both as a customer would and reply with the three changes I would make first. No charge and no obligation.

- Email: shelton@frugalsourcing.com
- Web: www.frugalsourcing.com

How Frugal Sourcing helps

- **Branded digital profile for manufacturers.** Positioning, a branded website and the proof to go on it.
- **Monthly LinkedIn marketing.** A content plan, posts and page management, built around your products and people.
- **Business development.** Presenting your business to customers in India, the UK and Europe, with introductions and trade-show support.
- **Partners and investment.** Introductions to joint venture partners, and to companies or investors interested in partnering with or investing in manufacturing businesses. Introductions only; not investment advice.

About the author

Shelton Julius is the Founder and Director of Frugal Sourcing, which he started in 2021 to help UK and European companies establish, source and grow in India, and to help SMEs take cost out of their business without taking quality out of their product.

He is a sourcing and supply chain professional with more than 25 years in manufacturing, over 22 of them spent on buses and bus sub-systems: complete bus bodies, interiors, seating systems, trims, bought-out parts, hardware and the supplier ecosystems behind them. He has worked with vehicle manufacturers and with Tier 1 and Tier 2 suppliers across India, the UK and Europe, on both the buying and the supplying side.

His specialism is localisation and indigenisation: taking products designed for European production and making them in India to cost, on time and without loss of quality or compliance. The method is practical rather than theoretical, built on zero-based costing, supplier development and frugal engineering. Three projects give the flavour of it. He led the complete localisation of European bus and rail seating systems for the Indian market, which took that business from €400,000 to €2.8 million of turnover in two years. He indigenised a 12-metre low-floor city bus body in full, inside a fixed six-month timeline and a set cost envelope, meeting every regulatory, safety and durability requirement. And he led sourcing and supply chain for a £45 million annual spend across more than 400 UK and European suppliers, with a team of eight buyers.

He holds a degree in mechanical engineering and an MBA for entrepreneurs. Alongside Frugal Sourcing he leads the India entry and growth of a European bus and rail interiors manufacturer, which is not named here, which keeps the advice in these guides tied to live projects rather than theory.

Frugal Sourcing works as a single accountable point of contact in the UK and Europe, backed by subject-matter experts on the ground in India. Beyond entry, sourcing and branding, Shelton supports clients with business development, and with introductions to joint venture partners and to companies and investors interested in partnering with or investing in manufacturing businesses.

Introductions to partners and investors are business introductions only. They are not investment advice or a regulated financial service, and each party should take its own professional advice.

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The Frugal Sourcing guides

- **Book 01: India Entry Playbook.** How to choose your route to market, find customers and partners, and avoid the costly mistakes in your first 12 months in India.
- **Book 02: The 1% Better Framework.** Small, steady improvements in BOM, sourcing and overheads that add up to big, sustainable savings, with 500 places to find your 1%.
- **Book 03: Branding for Manufacturers.** Why customers judge you online first, and a simple website and LinkedIn plan to turn your capability into enquiries.

TALK TO US

If something in this guide matches a decision on your desk, send a short note to shelton@frugalsourcing.com with what you make, where you sell and what you are trying to decide. You will get a straight answer on whether we can help.

Notes

Use these pages for your own notes, actions and questions.

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About this book

Customers now shortlist suppliers online, long before a request for quotation is issued. This guide shows manufacturers how to make real capability visible and believable: a clear position, honest proof, a small website that wins enquiries and a LinkedIn routine that takes fifteen minutes a day. Ten short sections, each with action tasks, and a 90-day plan. No marketing background needed.

About the author

Shelton Julius is the Founder and Director of Frugal Sourcing. He helps UK and European companies establish, source and grow in India, and helps manufacturers reduce cost, build their brand, develop new business and find the right partners.

Also in the series

Book 01: India Entry Playbook | Book 02: The 1% Better Framework | Book 03: Branding for Manufacturers