

Marketing expert calls for regulation to curb 'rip-off' potential

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A leading marketing expert is calling for the online marketing industry to adopt more stringent regulation to avoid small business owners spending money with unqualified, inexperienced marketers.

It comes as Niki Hutchison has picked up a latest accolade, shortlisted in the Great British Entrepreneur Awards within the Global Entrepreneur of the Year category.

Edinburgh-based Niki (<http://www.nikihutchison.com>) has also recently been recognised as an official Google Digital Garage trainer. She said: 'Being recognised in such prestigious awards and by Google is a wonderful feeling but most of all, I'm proud to be able to demonstrate the trust needed by my clients and potential clients.'

'This means more to me now, at a time when our industry is so lacking in regulation, meaning practically anyone can call themselves a marketer or business strategist. This means clients can invest in good faith, but often end up no further forward in their business, as well as out of pocket. Anyone investing in their business must check for evidence of qualifications and years of experience, things that should go without saying, but often do not.'

'Online, lots of people are portraying themselves as experts, and charging exorbitant prices for marketing, or marketing coaching. Scratch the surface and their offer is often lacking in any value or substance.'

'This brings not only a dreadful risk of people being ripped off but also tarnishes our whole business sector as all marketers can be lumped in with the charlatans.'

'I'm launching a free challenge <https://www.nikihutchison.com/master-your-marketing> to help people Master their Marketing and give them a taster of what it's like to work with me, so that they can feel safe and reassured in relation to my services.'

As co-founder of Adventures In Marketing, Niki also brings together other expert marketers for business owners to learn from and is set to host a second event in Edinburgh in February next year, after selling out the first one in February 2023.

She said: 'Marketing is made up of so many different elements, but may be presented in a really narrow way, according to one person's knowledge or skills. Reputable marketing professionals will have the skills to focus on how different elements will contribute to an overall strategy - I've been successfully doing this for over two decades.'

'I'd strongly advise small business owners seeking marketing support online to do their due diligence, comb through LinkedIn profiles and ask to see case studies and testimonials connected to former work - not just what the marketers claims to have generated for their own business. This proof can mean the difference between wasting money and getting a great return on investment.'

For Niki, some recent achievements include:

- Supporting well known marketers Andrew and Pete with the initial launch for their event ATOMICON 2023 which attracted their highest number of attendees ever in June
- Helping The Worst Girl Gang Ever attract over 300 members to their brand new membership against a goal of 100
- Writing three winning Marketing Society Scotland STAR Awards papers in 2022, winning two Golds and one Silver.

Niki has also been listed in Business Women Scotland's Top 100 Women in Business 2023, Digital Women's Top 50 Women to Watch 2022, and is also currently shortlisted for their Women's Champion Award, Digital Teacher/ Trainer Award and Digital Agency Owner Award in 2023.

She added: 'I share these achievements so people can see I genuinely know what I'm talking about and can help them use marketing strategically to get the results they're looking for.

'I'd love to see more stringent regulation within the online marketing industry so that supposed experts with little actual knowledge or experience are either required to undertake the relevant training to be able to back up their claims, or are forced out.

'This training could be in the form of one industry-recognised qualification, specifically for online marketers working with small business owners. Perhaps it can only be applied for after a certain length of time in the industry, or after submitting evidence of client results. This would serve potential customers far better than the current growing lineup of online marketers who may or may not have any real-world experience in helping businesses grow.

Issued by Linda Aitchison (07867 420803) for Niki Hutchison. Please contact Niki on 07949 645375.
niki@nikihutchison.com