

Glen Eira City Council Presents

DIGITAL PATHWAYS FOR BUSINESS

DIGITAL LITERACY PROGRAM

‘Digital Pathways’

June – November 2021



GLEN EIRA
CITY COUNCIL



INNER SOUTH-EAST
**Metropolitan
Partnership**



Jobs,
Precincts
and Regions

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Executive summary

Introduction

Digital Pathways was a digital marketing short course designed for small business owners and sole traders across the Bayside, Boroondara, Glen Eira and Stonnington city council areas.

Utilisation of the digital space has long been recognised an important tool for businesses of all sizes. The economic impact of COVID-19 on small businesses has placed an even greater emphasis on the need to develop digitally. The aim of the course was to help participants improve their digital literacy and evolve the digital presence of their businesses by teaching them digital marketing principles adapted to suit the needs of local small businesses. In addition to improved digital literacy, the course was structured to help business owners build their own digital marketing planning documents, tailored to the needs and available resources of their business. Ultimately 143 business owners from the four council areas signed up to participate.

Project delivery

The project was delivered by a digital marketing specialist over twelve weeks. Each week included one seminar (presented live and published on YouTube) covering a different digital marketing topic as well as workshops where small groups of participating business owners worked closely with the digital marketing specialist to discuss digital marketing principles in greater detail, workshop their digital marketing plans and receive detailed feedback on their existing digital presence.

Outcomes and recommendations

The course received overwhelmingly positive feedback with many participants reporting that they felt more capable and confident in digital spaces and had begun to implement the digital marketing plans that they had developed over the course of the twelve weeks. The high number of course registrations suggest that there is a significant need within the local small business community for digital marketing resources and support from council.

Introduction

Context

The Metropolitan Partnership Development Fund (MPDF) aims to develop and deliver regional, place-based projects that support priorities identified by the Metropolitan Partnerships in each of their regions, including on-ground projects to support social and economic recovery from COVID-19 impacts. The MPDF Program promotes partnership and engagement with businesses, local government and communities to deliver on-ground outcomes and have potential benefits across the whole metropolitan partnership region.

Glen Eira City Council received \$60,000 through the MPDF program to deliver the Digital Pathways program across the Inner South-east Metropolitan region, encompassing Glen Eira, Bayside, Boroondara and Stonnington local councils.

Digital Pathways was designed to help small business owners and sole traders develop strategic digital marketing solutions and evolve their digital literacy levels. Whilst digital marketing is widely recognised as an important business tool, small business owners often lack the time, resources, and knowledge needed to develop a sustained digital presence either independently or through a digital marketing services provider. Furthermore, the sheer amount of best practice digital marketing information available online and the industry focus on the national and global businesses led to many small business owners feeling overwhelmed and intimidated to a point where they did not want to engage with the digital space in any way. The economic impact of COVID-19 has intensified the need for improved digital literacy and platform use amongst businesses across the Boroondara, Stonnington, Bayside and Glen Eira council areas.

Objectives

The key objectives of the project were to:

1. Provide businesses with a broader understanding of how a digital marketing strategy can help their business grow.
2. Help small business owners develop confidence when operating in digital spaces.
3. Deliver a comprehensive suite of digital marketing literacy workshops, webinars and training materials that can easily be transferred across industries and municipalities.
4. Deliver guidelines and best practice methodologies for any business to implement a marketing strategy no matter what their level of digital literacy.
5. Adapt high level digital marketing concepts to suit the needs and resources of local businesses within the Glen Eira, Bayside, Boroondara and Stonnington Council areas.

Deliverables

The project deliverables were:

- Program of work guidelines
- 12 digital literacy seminars delivered via Zoom
- Facilitated small group workshop sessions delivered via Zoom
 - Approximately 13 workshops a week

- 2-10 business owners in each group
- A bank of recorded seminars and associated PowerPoint slides uploaded to YouTube and available on Glen Eira's digital business hub.
- 'Real life' scenario-based marketing activities
- A digital marketing plan template with sections to be completed by participating business owners as they progress through the program
- An in person digital marketing panel event and networking evening featuring digital marketing specialists answering participant sourced questions

Outside of scope:

- Direct digital solution delivery including websites, social media platform setup, analytics / reporting and ongoing digital / online consulting services

Key community groups involved

The project aimed to benefit local small to medium business owners and sole traders across the Glen Eira, Bayside, Boroondara and Stonnington city council areas.

Project Delivery

Delivery approach

Digital Pathways was delivered as a twelve-week program consisting of a weekly seminar on a digital marketing topic. Seminars were delivered live on Tuesday mornings via Zoom and then recorded and posted on YouTube the same day. All participants were sent an email on Tuesdays including a link to the YouTube seminar and one to a page where they could download the presentation slides.

The contents of each seminar were designed around a traditional digital marketing plan.

“I have found the sessions to be a great help in getting my business digitally ready for reopening out of COVID.”

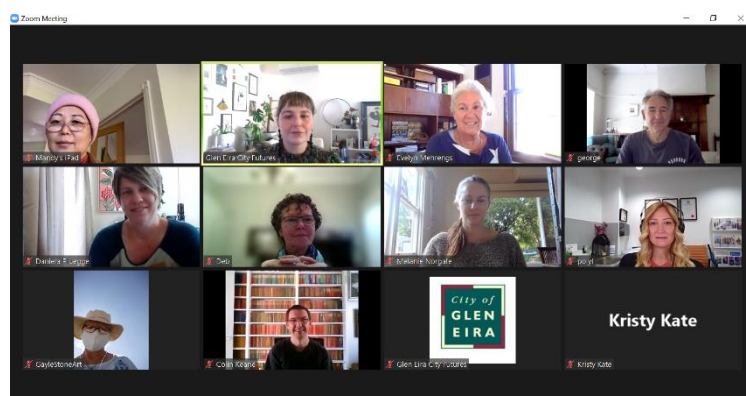
- Stonnington business manager

Topics corresponded with sections of a digital marketing plan starting with basic brand identity principles and progressing through strategic marketing elements all the way through to campaign measurement and renewal.

Participants were provided with a very simple digital marketing plan template (appendix 2) that they could fill out as the course progressed. Each seminar concluded with a set of weekly tasks (this usually involved filling out the relevant section of the digital marketing template) or discussion topics which would be further explored in the workshops.

The intensive small group workshops (run via Zoom) were an opportunity for participants to work closely with a digital marketing specialist to better understand the topic being covered in that week and how it applied to their business. Workshops were based loosely around the weekly tasks and discussion topics outlined in the seminar, but the structure was flexible and could be adapted to the needs and digital literacy levels of the participants. Workshop sizes varied from 2-10

participants and ran for one hour. Participants were encouraged to share what they had written down in their digital marketing plan which was then discussed with the digital marketing specialist and workshopped by the group. Workshops were also used as an opportunity for participants to have their web and social media presences analysed by the digital marketing specialist, demonstrating how a particular digital marketing principle could be applied. This real time analysis helped participants to understand the strategic thinking process necessary in digital marketing and provided them with detailed feedback that was adapted to the needs of their digital presence.



! screen grab from a week 9 workshop

Participants also had the opportunity to book one on one sessions with the digital marketing expert running the course. These were ad hoc sessions where participants could discuss marketing challenges they did not want to share with the group or go through an aspect of their digital presence in greater detail.

Key milestone activities

9/7/2021

All participating councils received a copy of course scope and promotional material to review.

20/7/2021

Registration for Digital Pathways opened. Registrations were completed online through a dedicated page on Glen Eira City Council's Taking Care of Your Business hub. All four councils begin running program promotions across their email, web and social channels. Each comms team has the option to adjust their rollout strategy in accordance with the unique needs of their platforms and audiences.

20/8/2021

Registration for Digital Pathways closed. Participants are sent a course information pack including a seminar and workshop schedule.

31/8/2021 Digital Pathways course commences. Rollout of course webinars and workshops.

Seminar schedule:

- **Week one:** Introduction to digital strategy and brand definition
- **Week two:** Defining your digital marketing goals
- **Week three:** Digital audience analysis and buyer personas
- **Week four:** Understanding the digital sales cycle
- **Week five:** Cultivating audience awareness
- **Week six:** Piquing audience interest and building trust
- **Week seven:** Encouraging customer desire and consideration
- **Week eight:** Delight part 1: The action phase
- **Week nine:** Delight part 2: Cultivating loyalty
- **Week ten:** How to measure your success
- **Week eleven:** Evolving your digital marketing plan
- **Week twelve:** Course in review

23/11/2021 Digital Pathways course concludes.

08/06/2022 Digital Pathways panel and networking evening is held.

Delivery challenges

The biggest delivery challenge of Digital Pathways was designing a course structure that was flexible enough to fulfill the scheduling requirements of small business owners and sole traders. This group of business owners and professionals often do not work traditional office hours and have schedules that vary weekly depending on the demands of their business. The solution to this was to provide lots of course access options for participants so they could tailor course delivery to suit their unique schedules. The seminar was delivered live on Tuesday mornings via Zoom and then recorded and posted to YouTube so that participants could access the seminar at a time that suited them.

When filling out the course registration, participants were asked to nominate a day of the week and time (morning, evening, or night) that would best suit them to attend a workshop. Their answers were used to create a workshop schedule which included 12 workshop timeslots across all five days of the week running at 8-9 am in the morning, 2-3pm in the afternoons and 5-6pm in the evenings. Participants were welcome to attend any session.

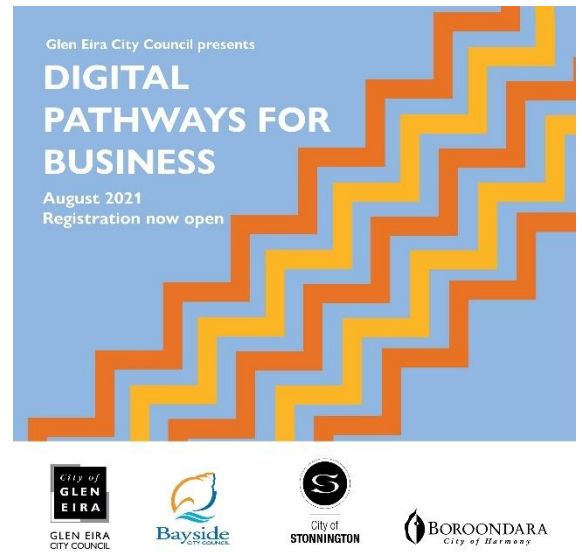
“It has been very valuable to my business. It is bite sized so I can do the homework and achieve another part or the whole throughout the week. ... It has made me more aware of things I need to focus on, rather than a scattered approach.”

- Glen Eira business owner

The course content was also structured so that participants could come and go as they pleased. Participants were provided with a seminar schedule before the course commenced and most of the seminars could stand alone, covering one topic so if participants could pick and choose which ones they wanted to attend. This flexible course structure proved effective and convenient for most participating businesses with 39% attending the live seminars, 13% accessing the content via YouTube and 47% using a combination of both (appendix 3).

Community engagement in the organisation

A multi-channel course promotion strategy was developed that encompassed web, social media and email marketing. A set of promotional images were put together using a simple blue, yellow and orange graphic. Variations including versions with and without council logos, as well as varied sizing for web, email, Facebook, and Instagram were included in a comms pack that was sent out to the communications department of each participating council. Key messaging points as well as a call to action pointing participants to the registration page were also included. Each Council's comms team was encouraged to adapt the promotional material provided to suit the style conventions of their platforms and the needs of their audiences. Course promotion ran for a month from 20/7/2021 until 20/8/2021.



2 Social media promotional tile

143 businesses ultimately registered to participate in the program. Business owners came from a wide range of different industries including health, finance, beauty, professional services, art and design, retail, hospitality, education, manufacturing, and fitness. Broken down by council area, the numbers were:

- 42 from Glen Eira
- 75 from Stonnington
- 18 from Bayside
- 8 from Boroondara

Outcomes and recommendations

Evaluation methods

Course evaluation methods included a participant feedback survey conducted via Survey Monkey (appendix 3) as well as written testimonials from participants (appendix 4).

Outcomes

Digital Pathways registrations far surpassed any expectations with 143 small businesses signing up across the council areas.

Objectives achieved

The was received positively and enthusiastically by participating businesses. Of those who participated in the exit survey:

- 83% stated that there had been a significant improvement in their digital marketing knowledge.
- All felt more confident when navigating digital spaces as a small business owner. 52% felt significantly more confident.
- 86% felt they had gained a clearer idea of the digital marketing options available for small business owners.
- 87% learnt about digital marketing resources that they were not previously aware of.
- All participants learnt digital marketing techniques and strategies that they planned to implement in their businesses.
- 74% had already begun to implement new digital marketing strategies and techniques they had learnt by late 2021.

“Until now, I’d been feeling frustrated, and was starting to wonder if there were any people interested in my art. But [the course] got me thinking more strategically. Now I understand that my buyers are local to my area. [the course] really got me thinking about my current business plan and alter it to suit the needs of my buyers.”

- Glen Eira business owner

Key takeaways/lessons:

“The best part is the tutorials and the hands on help I have got. This will be by far the most useful digital course I have undertaken.”

- Stonnington business owner

There is a lot of demand for digital marketing support and resources from council. Many small business owners participating in the program related instances where they had lost money or had their brand damaged by private digital marketing companies. Other participants expressed a lack of trust for the unregulated industry or simply did not have the funds to engage the services of digital marketing specialists despite recognising the importance of having a digital presence in the current economic landscape.

Flexibility is absolutely everything when working with small business owners. Very few consistently attended the same workshop week on week, the

structure of the course meant they could come and go as they pleased, moving between workshop times and days and accessing the seminars via YouTube whenever they had the time. The fact that two of the three daily workshops were also outside of business hours also helped.

Creating a virtual business community played a significant role in supporting the mental health of business owners during the pandemic and enabled them to develop valuable new relationships within their community. The digital marketing panel evening held six months after the event demonstrated not only the long-term impact of the course on the digital literacy and marketing activities of the participating small business owners, but also the program’s positive social impact. Many of the participants had formed ongoing relationships with others from the course and also commented on the positive impact participation had on their mental health during the lock downs of 2021.



Figure 3 Digital Pathways panel evening

Recommendations

Some of the businesses needed more hands-on support than others. Some of the older business owners could have benefitted from someone sitting down with them in person and teaching them step-by-step how to do things like update their Google listing or create a Facebook post.

The need for small amounts of money (up to \$1000) to achieve short term projects was a frequent point of discussion. Most of the strategies discussed in the program were free, but there were a few instances where specialist assistance (i.e. to create a logo) was needed and business owners didn't have the money to do it.

A lot of participants expressed an interest in developing an online Digital Pathways group where they could share their progress. Others requested a kind of touch base meeting a few months after the course finished to help finesse their digital marketing strategies once they were implemented.

“I have enjoyed gaining a structured thought process to give me essentially, a step-by-step guide on how to ‘digitise’ my business. ”

- Stonnington business owner

Appendices

1. <https://www.gleneira.vic.gov.au/services/business-support/taking-your-business-online/digital-pathways>
Link to the permanent Digital Pathways series on the Glen Eira business hub
2. Digital marketing plan template provided to participating business owners



<your name>

November 2021

Executive Summary

Brand mission

Brand values

Unique selling points

Key challenges

Strategic goals

Target audience

Buyer persona 1

Buyer persona 2

Buyer persona 3

Current sales funnel

Audience reach and awareness

Interest and trust

Audience engagement and purchase

Repeat purchase and loyalty

Measurement strategy

Review plan

3. Digital pathways participant feedback survey link
https://www.surveymonkey.com/stories/SM-p2p84pvvldSpdG96ukejjA_3D_3D/
4. Written testimonials

The course is fantastic.

As a business, it has expanded our knowledge, sparked new ideas and refined and updated our digital strategy.

The presentation/workshop format works well, it allows you to go back and review presentations later and creates a collaborative approach with interesting ideas, discussion, and feedback.

Kate, the presenter, is excellent. She is knowledgeable, engaging, friendly and provides great feedback, ideas and insights.

I think it is a high quality and useful service to local small businesses.

I also think ongoing refresher courses should be offered to help businesses navigate the constantly changing and complex digital environment.

Joh, Stonnington Restaurant Owner

I am very much enjoying the Digital Pathways programme to date. It has provided the guidance for us to focus our digital marketing efforts for our retail store.

I commend Katherine on putting together an interesting course and maintaining patience with our diverse group.

Kellie Martin, Owner Soul 2 Sole Shoes, Glen Eira

“A thoroughly enjoyable and informative course. The best part is the tutorials and the hands on help I have got. This will be by far the most useful digital course I have undertaken. I really hope this kind of course continues – especially the 12 week commitment and the tutorials. It really gives business owners the edge.”

Aneesha Varghese, Owner of Integri, Stonnington

I would like to thank Katherine for all her help, I have found the Digital Pathways course engaging and challenging

Jed Hawkins, Owner of Eden Espresso Café, Stonnington

The Digital Pathways course has been an amazing experience. Katherine is brilliant at her job. The opportunity to participate in this free course has enabled me to focus on much needed digital literacy. I have gained valuable understanding of the essential components of online marketing. It has also helped with feeling supported. The combination of Kate's professional guidance and the opportunity to network with other local micro businesses has contributed to the success of this course. Thank you so much.

Victoria Hodges, Owner of Pamela Coco, Glen Eira

As a small business owner with limited digital skills, I have found this program very helpful. The information has been well presented and I am able to implement and apply some of the information to my digital marketing strategy. I like that I can access the information by way of the YouTube videos at my convenience. I will re watch them all over the coming weeks. Thanks to everyone who has been involved.

Pamela Irving, Artist and Owner of Pamela Irving Studio + Gallery, Glen Eira

This digital Pathways meeting gave me such a good quality time.

Kate is very friendly and supportive person using digital guidelines which is very helpful and easy to follow.

I could talk to local artist community organizer baker etc..many talented people. That makes me motivated to try new things going forward.

Thank you very much

Yuka Kuldin, Owner of Sunshine Breeze Health and Wellbeing, Glen Eira

Although I've been active in the social media arena, it wasn't until Kate showed me how to look at my products from my Customer's point of view that I was able to make some real sales. Kate explained how to create posts and videos that would engage my buyers and give them the information, in a palatable way, so that they could enquire or buy online.

Until now, I'd been feeling frustrated, and was starting to wonder if there were any people interested in my art. But Kate got me thinking more strategically. Now I understand that my buyers are local to my area. And there are lots of them! By simply describing the fundamentals of digital marketing, Kate was able to really get me thinking about my current business plan and alter it to suit the needs of my buyers.

I feel that at this stage of the course, I'm gaining valuable knowledge. But more than that, I've also been introduced to my fellow students. And Kate has been an amazing facilitator, guiding and helping us all to understand the basic concepts; and to put them in place within our businesses.

We are finding that we can (with Kate's help) share our experiences and help each other. It's been a supportive environment, and I'm sure that our new relationships will continue into the future. So far, I've learnt so much about putting out the word on social media to my customers, without feeling like I'm hitting them over the head with information. It's been an enlightening experience, and I'm happy to follow through and continue the journey

Gayle Stone, Artist and Owner of Lighten Up Fit, Glen Eira

I have found Katherine's digital pathways programs to be very informative and helpful. I only wish I had more spare time to be able to fully attend every session.

Thank you to the Glen Eira & Stonnington Councils on making this program available to myself and many other small businesses.

Mark Buttifant, Director of NetSports, Stonnington

It has been very valuable to my business. It is bite sized so I can do the homework and achieve another part or the whole throughout the week. The delivery is great and the workshops really help solidify things. It has made me more aware of things I need to focus on, rather than a scattered approach. Small business can not be good at everything, but it also can not afford to pay experts in everything either. Even if the digital presence is outsource if helps the business owner know what to ask for or expect.

Daniela Pluegge-Stevens, Owner of Mandala Financial Services, Glen Eira

Yes. This is very good program, I found it very helpful. Especially, Katherine is a very good teacher, explaining everything in clear details. And following up with all extra requests.

Thank you very much.

I'm getting benefits from it.

Mandy Qin, Owner of Saki Japanese Restaurant, Boroondara

The Digital Pathways program has been a game changer for how I approach my business. The format of a weekly seminar and interactive workshop is accessible, the content is easy to understand and I've enjoyed meeting other local business owners. Kate has been a delight with her helpful feedback and provides informative answers to all of our questions. As a result, I've made great strides in understanding my target audience, digital sales cycle and now have great clarity moving forward into 2022. Thank you!

Kristy Prause, Designer and Owner of Kristy Kate Design, Stonnington

“I have found the program to be really interesting and productive. We have covered all the key areas in terms of digital marketing & channels and I feel that the information provided has helped to enable me to focus on those key aspects of our operation that need better support and investment. On the back of what I have discovered during the program the company has started sourcing external experts to help grow our digital profile and reach.”

Colin Keane, Director of The Campus Bookstore, Glen Eira

I am enjoying the course and realise that I have a lot to do, to bring our Social Media presence up to speed.

Get that 'subscribe' button, Facebook and Instagram links on the website.

Branding is what I always brow beat my business partner about and doing the course has confirmed that it is essential along with prompt response to queries - 'COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE'

I will be looking into quarterly email newsletters, with upcoming events, theme nights and staff news, along with specials.

It has been an interesting learning experience, a little different for us, as bar, where we don't actually sell anything online, other than occasionally, prepaid entry for groups. But we do need a good social media presence and be visible.

Evelyn Mehrengs, Owner of Revellers Bad, Stonnington

Katherine is so fabulous I would love to bottle her! She is so engaging I have not missed one class or workshop. Her knowledge is unbelievable and no matter what question is thrown her way, she eloquently answers. I would attend any course she was running.

Deb Benkemoun, Owner of Carry On Living, Stonnington

I have really enjoyed the course. I think you are a wonderfully intelligent, very informed and knowledgeable leader and I have enjoyed gaining a structured thought process to give me essentially, a step-by-step guide on how to 'digitise' my business.

It has been very insightful to also attend in a group setting to learn from others by hearing their questions and business journey too.

Very glad you have emailed us the slides and videos to read in our own time as I will definitely go back and re-read the materials you have gone through at a later stage.

Fiona Wong, Owner of KAMMEE Pty Ltd, Stonnington

“Kathryn’s presentations & workshops are totally invaluable ... so concise, following a step by step process; easy to understand & implement. Thank you for the opportunity to participate & gain a greater understanding regarding Digital Pathways.”

Josephine Bastone, Owner of Romeo Bastone Couture, Stonnington

Kate YOU ARE AMAZING AT THIS!

I feel so much more prepared to start our digital marketing strategy and launch our new label by doing this course.

The weekly workshops have been particularly great to bounce ideas and shift my perspectives.

Thanks for all your work and enthusiasm on this!

Renee Robins, Owner of Emren, Glen Eira

So far so good, learned a lot.

The ZOOM session make it easy as it doesn't take out too much time of your daily schedule, no travel

The seminars are very clear and concise and length is perfect

The workshops are a great tool discuss findings and outcomes with other participants. Great ideas are coming up and I think we are really helping each other to take the next step

Lillian Schmitt, Owner of USOL Pty Ltd, Bayside

I have found the digital pathways course so valuable. Being a small business owner has meant I have had to learn skills outside my profession such accounting, administration and of course marketing. This course has help me take my business to the next level digitally and I am very appreciative of the direct recommendations and support given in the small tutorial groups.

Poly Loakes, Clinical Audiologist and Owner of Earscan, Stonnington

I have found the sessions to be a great help in getting my business digitally ready for reopening out of COVID.

Brad Ford, Manager of The Angel Hotel, Stonnington