



DIGITAL MINDS

12 Things Every Business Needs to Know About Digital Marketing



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CONTENTS

[ACKNOWLEDGMENTS](#)

[Introduction: The Digital World](#)

[1 The Digital Landscape: Framework and Strategy](#)

[2 Content Marketing is King](#)

[3 PPC: Get Leads Fast](#)

[4 Landing Page Optimization: It's About Psychology Not Technology](#)

[5 Display Advertising: What You're Missing](#)

[6 Search Engine Optimization: It's Not Dead](#)

[7 Social Media Shakedown](#)

[8 Video Marketing: Don't Blink or You'll Miss It](#)

[9 Email Marketing: A Constant Drip](#)

[10 Responsive Web Design: The Future](#)

[11 Mobile Marketing: On the Move](#)

[12 Don't Forget About measurement](#)

[PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER](#)

[NOTES](#)

[ABOUT THE AUTHORS](#)

[Copyright](#)

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INTRODUCTION:

THE DIGITAL WORLD

Technology and the Internet are in flux. Some of the most popular companies in the world – Apple, Google, Facebook, Microsoft and Samsung – are from the tech and Internet industries. The platform devices and operating systems being developed by these tech giants are changing the way we interact with the Internet and each other.

As the Internet continues to shift the way we seek information, technology is working equally hard to change the way we consume that information. But change is difficult; people don't like to adapt, whether to a new house or a different smartphone. As hard as it is for people to face change, we now live in a digital world. And in this new world, traditional forms of advertising don't work as well as they used to.

We still watch TV and listen to the radio, sure, but the ads we see and hear on these mediums are untargeted and reach us outside of the buying cycle. People now search for information before, or even during, the purchasing process. The notion of a person watching TV and running out to buy something they see in a commercial is no longer reality. Now, the buying cycle consists of a customer in a store searching their mobile device for information about a product they're holding in their hands. Enter digital marketing, something else new and scary. First businesses dismissed the Internet as a fad, claiming they didn't need a website. Now that those businesses are online, they're told to use social media, do mobile marketing and pay Google when people click on their ads and visit their website. With so many ever-changing options, digital marketing can be confusing. And indeed, many businesses have chosen to bury their heads in the sand instead of accepting the challenge of digital marketing. But savvy business managers and entrepreneurs who saw the immense opportunity of the digital landscape have certainly reaped the benefits. Luckily for you and your business, digital marketing is in its infancy and there's still plenty of time to catch up to speed.

So where does digital marketing and technology fit in today's online world? The short answer is everywhere. The more ways a business can enhance their online presence, the better. And as each new digital trend emerges, the businesses that are best at adapting and making it work for them are winning online.

This book is divided into 12 chapters, each one written by either a WSI Consultant or a member of the Corporate Team who has specific expertise on their topic. The book can be read cover-to-cover or digested one chapter at a time (in any order). It was written as a guide to digital marketing for business managers and entrepreneurs who have yet to take the plunge and don't know where to start. It's the hope of the WSI team and all authors that this work will help you and your company dive into digital marketing and never look back.

THE DIGITAL LANDSCAPE: FRAMEWORK AND STRATEGY

By Husam Jandal

Business owners and entrepreneurs are starting to recognize the importance and value of an online presence. And while a universal acceptance of digital marketing is a huge step forward for the marketing industry, many business owners are in such a rush to get online that they fail to develop a proper strategy for the move into the digital space. Going digital for the sake of having a website and using social media is not the answer; by themselves and in the wrong hands, these things are often misused or incorrectly implemented. The real key to generating a great return on investment (ROI) with Internet marketing is using your business goals to develop a dedicated strategy.

Meet the Digital Royal Family

There are four main pillars of digital marketing emerging as the ‘Digital Royal Family’ – cornerstones upon which to build successful digital marketing campaigns. These are the areas every entrepreneur and business manager needs to know and understand in order to be successful in the digital age of the Internet.

Content is Still King

While the phrase ‘Content is King’ has become an overused cliché, the statement is as true as ever. King Content is the lifeblood of digital marketing. Without content, the strategies and techniques discussed in this book wouldn’t be effective.

So what exactly is content? In the context of the Internet, content is anything digital: website copy, blog posts, infographics, newsletters, whitepapers, campaigns, videos, and web and mobile applications. Anything designed to bring value to the audience consuming it – whether in the form of entertainment or information – is considered content.

The Internet is saturated with mediocre content, which places an even greater importance on creating content with a clearly defined strategy based on specific goals and expectations. Figure 1 outlines the drastic degree to which defined content strategies are being implemented or planned by both brand marketers and agency clients, which further indicates that content is King of the Digital Royal Family and Ruler of the Internet Realm.

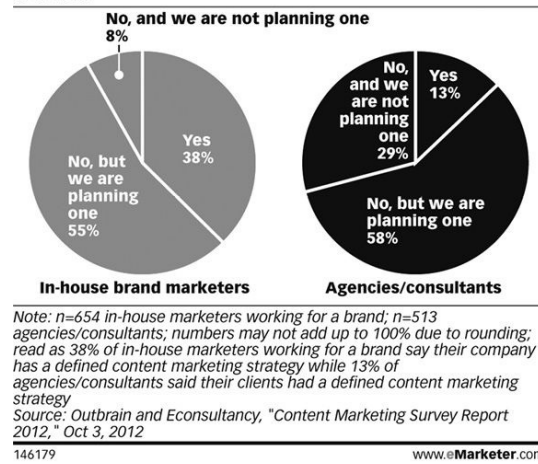


Figure 1: Content Marketing Strategy
Digital Advertising is Queen

Next in the hierarchy of digital marketing is Queen Digital Advertising. Stats show that digital advertising spend has steadily increased 15% year over year and is projected to continue at this pace into 2016 (see Figure 2). Regardless of geographical region, the stats say the same thing: digital advertising spend is on the rise. Businesses can't afford to ignore the shift to digital advertising any longer or the risk getting left behind the competition.

Digital Ad Spending Growth Worldwide, by Region, 2010-2016
% change

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Middle East & Africa	70.0%	55.8%	47.9%	47.4%	38.5%	30.0%	26.5%
Latin America	27.0%	34.0%	37.0%	23.0%	28.0%	18.0%	16.0%
Asia-Pacific	20.0%	23.1%	25.0%	19.0%	16.0%	14.0%	13.0%
Eastern Europe	32.7%	38.4%	18.9%	17.3%	15.5%	13.0%	9.0%
North America	15.6%	21.5%	16.6%	13.8%	12.4%	9.0%	6.8%
Western Europe	15.5%	13.9%	10.6%	11.0%	10.0%	7.4%	6.6%
Worldwide	17.5%	20.6%	17.8%	15.1%	13.7%	10.8%	9.3%

Note: includes advertising that appears on desktop and laptop computers as well as mobile phones and tablets, and includes all the various formats of advertising on those platforms; excludes SMS, MMS and P2P messaging-based advertising
Source: eMarketer, Dec 2012
148094 www.eMarketer.com

Figure 2: Digital Ad Spending Growth, Worldwide, by Region
Mobile is Prince

Things get a little crazy starting with the children of the Digital Royal Family. They're young, wild, and slightly unpredictable, but their potential is limitless and relatively untapped (at least for the time being). The bad boy of the family is Prince Mobile.

Figure 3 outlines not only the prevalence of smartphone use, but also how rapidly it's going to increase by 2016. As more people search for and consume information on the go with their high-functioning smartphones, mobile will play an integral role in any successful digital marketing strategy.

Prince Mobile continues to grow and become more prominently featured at the core of digital marketing, which makes him the next King of the Digital Royal Family.

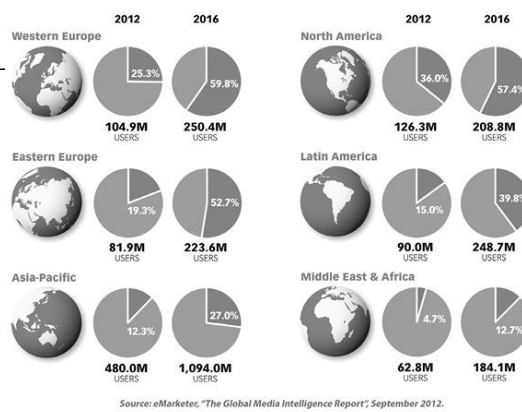


Figure 3: Global Media Intelligence Report

Social is Princess

The darling of the Digital Royal Family – the belle of the ball – is Princess Social (short for Social Media – sometimes she drops her middle name). She’s cutting edge, not afraid to take risks, and although she’s still changing at breakneck speed, businesses can’t afford to ignore Princess Social’s rapid growth.

Figure 4 shows constant amounts of growth in social networking spend from 2010-2012. In the coming years, social spend is expected to increase by 33%, followed by another 22% the next year. Social media is here to stay. The many businesses that are choosing not to use social – mainly because they don’t understand it – are going to regret their refusal to adapt. The key to unlocking the value of social media is embracing it and finding a way to make it work for your business.

Princess Social is poised to transition into her role as the next Queen of the Digital Royal Family. The Social Media chapter will delve a little deeper into how you can successfully integrate Princess Social into your digital marketing efforts.

Social Network Ad Spending Share Worldwide, by Region, 2010-2014					
	% of total				
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
North America	55.2%	50.7%	49.7%	48.8%	48.9%
Western Europe	27.4%	25.4%	24.6%	22.3%	20.9%
Asia-Pacific	14.4%	19.4%	20.6%	22.9%	23.7%
Eastern Europe	1.7%	2.3%	2.5%	2.8%	2.8%
Latin America	1.2%	1.9%	2.3%	2.7%	3.1%
Middle East & Africa	0.1%	0.2%	0.3%	0.4%	0.6%

Note: includes display, search, video and other forms of paid advertising appearing within social networks, social games and social applications; excludes spending by marketers that goes toward developing or maintaining social network profile pages or branded applications; numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding
Source: eMarketer, Nov 2012

147561 www.eMarketer.com

Figure 4: Worldwide Social Network Ad Spend Share

Digital Marketing Framework

Now that the Digital Royal Family has been introduced, it’s time to take a step back and look at the type of environment your business needs to create in order for them to thrive. Content, advertising, mobile and social media will make up the foundation of your digital marketing efforts, but what kind of base do they have? This base is called a digital marketing framework. The framework is a six-step process, made up of the following phases: Discovery, Internet Business Analysis, Build, Implement, Measure and Manage Results.

Discovery

The first and most important element of the digital marketing framework is Discovery. It’s the longest phase and requires the most time and energy to piece together, but if done correctly, it’ll ensure the

success of the other five phases and drive your entire digital marketing strategy. The core components of Discovery include identifying goals and objectives, selecting strategies and tactics, exploring new opportunities, and setting metrics and targets.

Internet Business Analysis

The second phase of the digital marketing framework is the Internet Business Analysis. Now that your goals and objectives have been identified, the next step is researching how best to implement a digital marketing strategy. There are three specific tasks that will yield valuable information: market segmentation, persona development and competitor analysis.

In the process of market segmentation, a business will consider which pieces of the market to target and then analyze those areas. You'll have much greater success when targeting niches rather than jumping headlong into a vast and uncharted ocean of consumers.

Persona development involves the creation of fictitious characters that represent various types of your customers by incorporating different demographics, interests, locations, age groups, gender and behavior. Once personas are created, specific and more personal campaigns and strategies can be used to target the differing customer types which will lead to a higher conversion rate, more sales and a better ROI.

Before implementing digital marketing tactics, it's a good idea for you to analyze your competitors to see what they're doing in the digital space. An in-depth competitor analysis often returns valuable information including strategies that are working for your competitors (which you can then implement) and areas where you can gain a definite competitive advantage.

Build

The next component of the digital marketing framework is Build. The Build phase is where the strategic development of a digital marketing plan shifts into resource planning and allocation. Before the requirements of a digital marketing strategy can be built or implemented, your business needs to have a discussion about who will build it and at what cost? Are there enough staff members to handle it internally or do you need an agency or consultant? How much budget do you have available?

Businesses that choose to work with consultants will discover that experts can alleviate the pressure of Build (and much of the following three phases) from the equation as they'll already be off and running with the project at this point.

Regardless of the path, the Build phase is where you'll set up or modify your digital assets, which are things like your website, social media profiles and the development of any other digital campaigns.

Implement

Following Build is the Implement phase. During this period all of the digital assets and campaigns tasked throughout Build need to be scheduled for launch and subsequently activated. A cohesive and well-organized launch strategy can pay dividends as it's often an underrated part of most digital marketing efforts.

Measure

Once businesses are fully operating within the digital space, many consider their job done. They step back and wait for good things to start happening and are either satisfied by mediocre results or simply disappointed. Don't build, implement and wait, because it won't do you any good. The Measure phase of the digital marketing framework is what enables you to determine which strategies work best and

enhance those that are generating a positive ROI with your marketing budget.

Since most businesses aren't aware of the Measure phase, this is another area where an agency consultant can assist. A consultant helps you determine target goals for each digital tactic and then sets up the measurement of those metrics.

Manage Results

The Manage Results phase is the final cog in the digital marketing framework. One of the most helpful aspects of digital marketing is that anything and everything can be measured. After implementing a campaign and letting it run for a reasonable amount of time (and also tracking correctly), it'll be easy to discern whether the campaign works. If it doesn't, pull the plug. If it works, start the digital marketing framework again and figure out how to enhance it.

Most businesses aren't managing their results - at least not yet. The monitoring of digital marketing efforts allows you to make ongoing adjustments and rapid improvements to campaigns. The Manage Results phase is the key to more efficient digital marketing and could be the competitive edge your business is lacking.

The Benefits of a Process

The digital marketing framework is really a cycle, much like WSI's Digital Marketing Lifecycle™. Adhering to a cyclical process is especially efficient for digital marketing due to the constantly shifting nature of the industry. What works now won't work next year if it isn't updated and adapted to reflect the changes of the Internet, technology, consumer behavior and industry best practices.

WSI's Digital Marketing Lifecycle™ was created as a framework to develop and maintain successful digital marketing strategies. Each phase works in tandem with the next and is vital to the cycle as a whole. If a segment is left incomplete, the cycle becomes disconnected and the digital components involved will never meet their full potential.



Figure 5: The WSI Lifecycle

First Things First:

The Importance of Discovery

While all phases of the digital marketing framework do play an equal role in the overall success of any digital marketing strategy, there would be no framework without the Discovery phase. Businesses often have a hard time determining how and where to start their digital marketing efforts, and since most are in a hurry to catch up, things can get messy. And a messy start just breeds dysfunction, inefficiency and ultimately failure, which leaves that business – the one that was rushing to get online

– even further behind the competition.

Identifying Goals and Objectives

As part of the Discovery phase, you'll need to identify your goals and objectives. For most businesses, these goals and objectives break down into three categories: lead generation, brand awareness and customer retention.

The first step to identifying your goals and objectives is to determine how your current efforts align with these categories and analyze how effective those efforts have been. This analysis should help you expose gaps and areas of opportunity within your strategy, which allows you to begin identifying a new set of goals and objectives for digital marketing campaigns.

Lead generation. The objective of any business is to fill a consumer need with a product, service or solution. However this requires one important thing: actual customers. You might offer an amazing service, but if nobody knows about or realizes its value, it won't succeed. Lead generation is a process or tactic that puts you in front of customers to make them aware of your offerings.

Due to the nature of lead generation – which simply means finding customers – startup businesses and companies without an audience or client base should focus on this process. Digital strategies that excel at lead generation include display advertising, paid search advertising (PPC) and search engine optimization (SEO).

Brand awareness. Of course businesses want more people to be aware of their brand, but many don't know how to proactively enhance consumer knowledge. Brand awareness means ensuring that potential clients are aware of your business and the products you offer. Consider the Kleenex brand, for example. Kleenex is a brand of facial tissue, but many people simply refer to the noun, facial tissue, as Kleenex. *That's* brand awareness.

Kleenex is a big brand, but there are many techniques that can help you increase the rate at which consumers attach your brand's name to a product or service. Content marketing and display advertising are great strategies that, when combined and properly executed, can accomplish an incredible spike in brand awareness.

Customer retention. Keeping customers happy is a hallmark of successful businesses. But the game has changed. Perhaps the most drastic shift brought on by digital marketing and the Internet is the way customers seek out and engage with the brands they purchase. If your brand isn't accessible or willing to interact with customers – on both sides of the buying cycle – you're at risk of losing potential customers and retaining less of your current clientele.

Having an open line of communication with your customers and giving them more access to your business is a great way to foster trust and good will with both prospective and current clients. Content, social and email marketing are very effective strategies you can use to improve your overall ability to retain customers.

Selecting Tactics

Once a business has effectively set its goals and objectives for a digital marketing campaign, the next step is to decide which tactics are best suited to hit specific targets. Many businesses jump into digital marketing without understanding the strengths or purpose of the tactics they attempt to implement, often trying to do a little bit of everything. Doing a little bit of everything is a huge mistake. If you only have the budget and employee time to do a few of these things, it's better to do those few really well than all of them poorly.

Additionally, you need to implement the strategies that best align with your goals. Some tactics do

better job of generating leads, so if leads are a priority, you should devote most of your focus to tactics that excel at lead generation.

Content marketing. Since content is the core of many other digital tactics, content marketing is actually a very balanced and effective strategy in all three categories. Overall, content marketing slightly favors customer retention, but it's still a great way to generate leads and increase brand awareness, and is a vital component of any successful digital strategy.

Paid search advertising (PPC). Paid search advertising (the pay per click ads found on search engine results pages) is an exceptional lead generation tool. To a lesser extent, PPC campaigns can be effective for brand awareness, but they excel at honing in on people who are interested in your product or service and driving them to your website. Again, if customer retention is your main objective, paid search advertising isn't the answer.

Display advertising. Similar to PPC, display advertising is a great lead generation tool for many businesses. But where display advertising excels is in the brand awareness category. Once a customer engages with your brand, the goal is to convert them to a brand advocate so that they recommend and say good things about your product or service. If you're struggling to retain customers however, display advertising isn't the best strategy.

Search engine optimization (SEO). SEO helps direct search engine traffic to websites and is similar to PPC, except there's no charge for these clicks. SEO is a very effective lead generation tool and also helps out in the brand awareness department. By targeting specific keywords, SEO can connect you with searchers who are looking for the products and services you offer.

Social media marketing. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Google+ are social platforms that many businesses are struggling to incorporate into their marketing plans. And that's understandable. Social media is young and changes very rapidly. But the businesses that have figured out that social media marketing is a valuable component to brand awareness and customer retention are ahead of the curve and reaping the benefits of early adoption. Social can be an invaluable tool for connecting with customers, answering questions about products and services and improving the customer experience.

Video marketing. Much like social and mobile, video marketing has exploded over the last few years. As the cost of creating videos has decreased, it's become an excellent strategy for increasing brand awareness. Video also complements both social and SEO efforts by encouraging consumer engagement and boosting organic rankings. If used correctly, videos can be leveraged for lead generation but overall, they're most effective for expanding your brand and allowing you to creatively market your products and services.

Email marketing. Second to only content marketing in terms of overall balance, email marketing is an incredibly effective and underrated tactic. By remaining top-of-mind and reaching out to your customers, email marketing is great at customer retention and brand awareness. Because of the many ways to collect email addresses – by giving away free content, running contests, and engaging on social media – email marketing can also help you generate leads and make initial contact with potential customers.

Conversion architecture. Landing page optimization and responsive design, which fall under conversion architecture, are vital components of lead generation tactics. If you run PPC and display ad campaigns, you'll need to ensure your website is optimized for conversion to enhance those strategies. Conversion architecture should be implemented to augment lead generation and brand awareness tactics.

Mobile marketing. As smartphone adoption continues to rise and tablets become increasingly popular, more people are searching, engaging and making purchase decisions from their mobile devices. Like social media, mobile is relatively young and most businesses are trying to get a handle on how they can incorporate it. But the truth is, some businesses have mastered mobile and are launching themselves ahead of the competition with it. Mobile is an excellent tactic for brand awareness and customer retention.

Everything Works Together

The purpose of the Discovery phase is to help you invest a relatively small amount of time in return for major results. The time and honesty required to analyze and identify your goals and objectives for digital marketing will pay off. Not only will the Discovery phase give you a clear internal picture with regards to your marketing, but it'll set you up to achieve marketing success where it matters most: on the Internet.

Businesses that want to accomplish total digital marketing success can also become educated on the strategies and techniques they may not know or understand. For example, if you decide to throw a bunch of money at social and mobile marketing, educate your team. If you don't take the time to teach your employees about the strategy and the goals and objectives behind it, the techniques may have a hard time gaining traction. When it comes to digital marketing, the whole team needs to be on-board.

The world of digital marketing can be daunting. Things move and change quickly, and what works today might be dated a few months down the road. As a result, you should consider consulting experts to keep you up to speed on the evolving landscape of the Internet, because when the Internet changes so does the digital marketing framework. The perfect digital strategies are often a mix of in-house talent and the creativity and knowledge of industry experts, so don't be afraid to think outside the box or ask for help.

CONTENT MARKETING IS KING

By Francois Muscat

In the past, businesses could get away with sending their messages in short bursts through traditional marketing mediums. But today, businesses are shifting toward attracting their target market with good content. The importance of quality content has caused many marketers to transform into publishing departments that create and distribute educational and compelling content to their customers. Your business needs to start doing exactly the same thing.

Content marketing has given small businesses the opportunity to become publishers of news and content and has leveled the playing field. Now, even the little guys can publish content. But the challenge that small businesses usually face is finding the time and talent to develop a consistent flow of new and interesting information.

Some marketers believe they can use any type of content to support any type of marketing. And while content marketing makes use of social media, it's different than social media marketing.

Customers expect businesses to have registered social media profiles on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. Social profiles give customers a way to connect with you and ask questions about your products and services. Social profiles also act as platforms for distributing content, which helps build the audience needed to grow and expand your customer base.

When you post high quality content, you're giving potential customers free and useful information (as opposed to hard-selling your offerings). With articles, blog posts, case studies and whitepapers, you can use your expertise to creatively attract and engage an audience and build your brand. Content and social media marketing work in tandem to help increase that audience by distributing links to your high quality content.

Why Business Managers Should Support Content Marketing

When it comes to content marketing, a business needs to focus on its top priorities – lead generation and brand awareness. Content marketing builds your brand's identity in a way that's personable and attractive to millions of Internet users.

The main reason why traditional advertising is no longer enough is that people find the information they need online. Consumers now use the Internet to research a product, company or solution. Content helps you attract people to your products as they relate to solutions offered, not products sold.

A Website Isn't Enough

A static, five page website doesn't build trust or a consumer base. A volume of frequent and useful content drives SEO, which helps businesses rank well on Google. An absence of fresh content leads to poor rankings and no visibility on search engines or other platforms.

Some traditional marketers feel that content marketing is giving away something for free with no return. But by producing content, your business becomes a reliable, trusted source of information which is then associated with your products. A good reputation is priceless.

Content marketing takes time and money to produce (whether created in-house or outsourced to a copywriter), but it's extremely cost effective when compared to other online tactics such as display or paid search advertising. You need to look at content marketing as an opportunity to address the largest audience possible. Producing content and distributing it online is like being a keynote speaker at a conference full of potential clients – every single day.

Measurable Interaction and Returns

There are a number of metrics by which the success of a content marketing strategy can be measured. According to 2013 B2B Content Marketing Benchmarks, marketers look at the following things:

Measurement Criteria for B2B Content Marketing Success



Figure 6: Measurement Criteria for B2B Content Marketing Success***

Web traffic. The number of visits your website gets is one of the metrics that shows whether you're publishing quality content that people are reading. Analytics programs can determine what people are looking for, how long they stay on certain pages of content, and what they find most useful. This allows you to further tailor your content strategy to ensure that potential customers visit and engage with your website.

Direct sales. While it's great to build a loyal following with a content marketing strategy, the bottom line remains an important part of every business. If you're able to increase your direct sales thanks to publishing useful content, you know you're on the right track.

Sales lead quality. The quality of sales leads is also a great way to measure how well you understand your customers. If the content you publish clearly addresses your target market's needs, it will attract quality sales leads.

Qualitative customer feedback. When you start engaging with customers online, you gain the opportunity to ask customers for feedback via a website form, an article, or through comments on social media.

Reaching an Audience with Content Marketing

Customers are online and looking for products, services and solutions to their problems. It's up to you to grab customers first (and make no mistake - the competition from other companies trying to do just that is huge).

Content marketing is about understanding what consumers are searching for and how long they're

prepared to look for it.

Create Great Content

In order to start creating the kind of content your customers want to read, follow these five steps:

Understand the challenges customers face. Businesses can't write for everybody – they need to identify a well-defined (and well-understood) group of prospects. This is an area where personalization and targeted persona content can help businesses immensely.

Solve problems. Businesses need to shift the way they market their offerings. Instead of defining the value of products or services as features, you need to focus on the problems that your target audience faces and create content that solves these problems.

Become a trusted source. An important part of content marketing is to become a trusted source of information for target buyers. Businesses should aim to build a loyal following that trusts the information they publish. This only happens when you create meaningful content that helps solve problems.

Write fresh content. Businesses do still need standard content like a five page website with contact details and company history, but they also need to provide timely content at regular intervals. Blog posts are a great way to do this. Creating a blog-powered website can be a huge differentiating factor for small and medium-sized businesses.

Make it easy to buy. Businesses don't have to hard sell, but they need to make it easy for people to transition from interested prospect to paying customer. Online products, contact information and services need to be easily accessible.

Distribute Content Online

Posting and distributing content online gives businesses the opportunity to create more ways for their customers to find, read about and trust them. A content marketing strategy that includes social media marketing creates a campaign-driven, highly strategic plan to track the cause and effect of their efforts through consumer engagement. Measurements like the number of retweets or the amount of people sharing your content show results and drive future campaigns.

The main goals of a content marketing strategy are lead generation and customer retention, which are achieved by sharing free and useful information to create brand awareness and position you as an expert in your field.

Content Marketing is About the Customer

A business's website should be more about its customers and less about the bottom line. If customers can see that you prioritize their needs, they'll trust you and your product, which sets them on their way to becoming an advocate of your brand.

Make Content Personal

Content marketing gives businesses a unique platform on which to address clients personally and casually. You can be more fun and get creative with these interactions since you aren't limited the way you are with other types of advertising.

Build Search Personas

Most businesses have more than one target audience and need to create content for each potential buyer. A good starting point when planning a content strategy is to identify the top three to five personas that are likely to visit your website. Think about each of these personas in terms of their

information they'd want to access from your website, and help them make the decision to use your products or services. Tailor your content towards the kind of people who are most likely to visit your website.

Consider the groups of people who buy from a paint company: handy household owners on a budget, small or large contractors, and artists. What would their concerns be and how would they differ? What do they want from the paint they buy? These questions provide answers that the paint company can use to attract potential clients that are looking for a solution rather than a product. The paint company could create content with titles such as: "How to Paint Wooden Furniture" or "What Paint Products Are Best for Industrial Buildings?"

SEO, or more specifically, the use of relevant keywords to create and optimize compelling content is an important part of an effective content strategy. But first you need to take a step back and determine what techniques align with your customers' needs. Create search personas to better understand what your customers are searching for online. Use these steps to build search personas:

Define your ideal customer. Businesses should be able to pinpoint their ideal customer. If you own a business that sells paint, you know your target market is relatively hands-on in terms of building and renovating, and they're more likely to be men aged 25 – 45.

Understand customers' problems and challenges. How would your customers articulate their pain points? What type of keywords would they be typing into search engines? A man looking for paint may search for "exterior paint" or "easy to clean interior paint", for example.

Create great content. You need to create great content that's optimized for these search phrases. Your content also needs to offer a solution, such as a call to action that will enable the reader to contact you for more information or to buy the product immediately.

Intrigue the reader. It's not easy to convert a searcher into a customer on a single page, so focus on calls to action that compel the reader to dive further into your sales funnel. Keep writing pages that are relevant to your searchers and drill down into things that are interesting and relevant to them.

Next, determine which social networks your potential customers are on. Younger, less formal searchers use Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest, while professionals are more likely to use LinkedIn. These are the social media profiles you need to create in order to distribute your content to the right people and build your customer base.

Channel Potential Buyers

If there's one thing that frustrates readers, it's reading content they're not particularly interested in while trying to find a solution to their problem. Channel your potential buyers directly to relevant content by asking them exactly why they're on your site.

For example, allow website visitors to select the content channel they prefer by having a clear site structure, easy navigation and proper content segmentation. This helps readers avoid content they have no interest in and guides them to relevant areas of your website more efficiently.

You can also enable a reader to relate to your content immediately by using customer testimonials and case studies. These are both perfect ways to show your potential clients that your product is of high quality as your marketing media suggests.

Use Marketing Funnels

The marketing funnel is a model that follows the journey of how a potential customer becomes a client. Planning and creating a funnel helps you determine exactly how you can streamline the sales

process of your company.

This model will help ensure that you don't miss out on the most significant audience – the people who are looking for a solution, but aren't yet aware that your company can provide it. The best way to achieve this is to publish educational blogs, articles and social media links parallel to your products and services. These should try to address reasons that potential clients could come into contact with your company. Here are the steps of a marketing funnel:

Step one. In the first stage, potential buyers have a query about something they're looking for but may not know where to find relevant information or what product they actually require. People use search engines and social sites to help them find what they're looking for, which hopefully leads them to your business's website and social profiles.

Step two. A buyer's next step is to do further research on your products with more in-depth information like eBooks, webinars and industry reports in order to make an informed decision. Your case studies and customer testimonials provide corroborating material to reassure potential clients that your product and service is their best choice.

Step three. Lastly, detailed product information and analyst reports tell the potential client exactly how to use your product upon purchase.

This model helps you address and hold your potential client's attention from the very beginning of the process, allowing them to navigate through your content and move towards a purchase while empowering them with relevant information at each stage of the buying process.

The Importance of Content Marketing

- The Internet is the go-to tool for initial research – if you aren't there, you don't exist to many potential customers
- Staying power – the right kind of content is relevant for many years
- You get to communicate directly with your customers
- Content that is closely related to your product will attract new clients when they search for their needs rather than specific products
- Tell your customers about your expertise in the industry, where you're going and what you're planning so that you become a trusted advisor and strategic partner

Content Marketing Tactics

There are many different types of content. Here are just a few ideas:

Social media. Use social networks to distribute links to content rather than posting the content itself. Answer product questions by linking to quality content.

Articles. Articles put your brand and product in the public eye. They also help you come across as an expert in your field and give your brand and products credibility.

Events. Distribute relevant, interesting content at trade shows and conferences. Draw people to your website properties by putting quick response (QR) codes on brochures and letting them know where they can ask you questions online (your social media profiles).

Blogs. Blogs give you a personal connection with your customers and provide you with the opportunity to give more detail than you'd be able to give on Facebook or Twitter.

Webinars. Create interactive conferences that allow you to train or educate people over the Internet.

(you could even broadcast a presentation on how to use your product). A name, face and a voice lend credibility to what you're saying.

Images. Content marketing isn't just text and video. Images, such as infographics, can be combined with your text to provide information-rich eye-candy for readers. Images can also attract search engine browsers and make your article or blog stand out from the crowd.

Content calendar. Create a content calendar to make sure your potential customers are receiving relevant material at regular intervals. It allows you to schedule and organize material for blogs and social networks well in advance. This way you ensure that your Twitter and Facebook posts coincide with relevant blog posts. A content calendar that includes all your posting platforms helps potential clients move through social media along a clearly defined path that addresses their specific need.

Achieving Content Marketing Success

There are a few things businesses can do to ensure a content marketing strategy is successful. These are the qualities of a successful content marketing campaign:

- Well-written, high quality content
- Have something new to say and ensure your content is well researched
- Understand your target market and provide information people are looking for
- Give your target audience something they haven't seen before
- Do keyword research and create targeted content
- Your content needs to be personal because you need your consumers to like and trust you
- Be interesting and engaging by using videos, product reviews, podcasts and eBooks to add variety and creative flair to your content strategy
- Allow comments on your articles, blogs and social media to initiate two-way conversations
- Organize your publishing plan with an editorial calendar

Make Content Marketing Work for You

You can't do everything yourself, so assign a small team to handle content marketing for your company. Do intense research to determine which content marketing tactics work best for you.

Content marketing doesn't have to be limited to two or three people. Encourage participation from outside the marketing team – remember that you're trying to figure out what people from all walks of life want to know about your product. The people within your company have probably been asked many questions about your products that have never been addressed to a wider audience. The questions will help you generate content ideas that need to be researched. Similarly, if clients are contacting you with questions, chances are there are hundreds of people online that are asking the same thing. If you can answer these questions with interesting content, you've implemented a winning content marketing strategy.

Once you've got content ideas and people assigned to create content, set targets so that the team knows how many blog posts and social media updates need to be posted within a specific timeframe. Keep in mind that the backbone of successful content marketing is a consistent flow of new and interesting information. Lastly, use analytics programs to see how well you're doing and in what ways you can improve, add to and streamline your content marketing strategy.

PPC: GET LEADS FAST

By Benjamin Smith

Paid search advertising (pay-per-click or PPC) are ads placed in search engines. PPC ads appear on search engine results pages (SERPS) above and to the right of the organic web listings. The positioning of PPC ads is determined by a keyword bidding process. Google refers to PPC as search engine marketing and their ad platform is called AdWords. Other search engines, notably Bing and Yahoo, also offer PPC ad systems.

PPC involves placing ads on SERPs that link to one of your website pages. When a searcher clicks on your ad, they're directed to the corresponding page. The process begins with a silent auction for keywords (search terms) relevant to your business that, along with what Google calls the quality score of your ad, determines the placement of your ad within the listings. Quality Score is determined by the keyword's click through rate (CTR) on Google, relevance of ad text, historical keyword performance, landing page keyword focus, and other relevancy factors. Each keyword must be bid on individually and can be associated with an ad group containing variations of the advertising message all with a link to one of your website pages.

So what's more valuable to businesses: SEO or PPC? The truth is, it depends on factors like:

- How competitive the keywords that are relevant to your business are
- The cost of PPC bids for various keywords
- Whether your business is local, regional or national
- The type and cost of product or service you market
- How much time you can budget to the PPC and SEO administrative tasks
- How many leads you need to either maintain or expand your business

There are several important aspects of paid search advertising, including:

- Keyword research
- Well-crafted ad copy
- A/B ad testing
- Bid management with multiple publishers
- Landing page content relevance
- Call to action strategy
- Results measurement

Quick and Reliable Traffic for a Fixed Cost

Paid search is a unique form of advertising in the sense that it provides immediate results. A properly managed can appear quickly on page one of a SERP, unlike organic website listings that take a long time to reach page one, if ever.

Quite literally, a PPC ad can be written, published, and on its way to driving results for you.

company before you even finish reading this chapter. It can be turned off just as quickly. Furthermore, ads can be scheduled in advance and turned on and off on specific dates and times.

For example, imagine that you're a car dealer and the manufacturer just started a major television advertising campaign for a new car model that you sell. Since you want to leverage the increased interest created by the commercials, you quickly setup a PPC ad specifically for that model. You set the campaign to only target searches in the city where your dealership is located and direct the traffic to the page on your website about that car model. Local search traffic immediately starts flowing to that page where customers can view available inventory and connect with a salesperson.

Reliable Traffic

You'd agree that when an advertising method is driving positive results to your business, you hope it continues day after day. That just so happens to be one of the major benefits of PPC marketing.

There are billions of searches completed every day on search engines and there's no end in sight for the growth in search volume. Many of the searches are for specific products or services, a portion of which are probably very relevant for almost every business.

With the right keyword mix, it's not difficult to maintain a steady stream of reliable traffic to your website. Each day brings new customers to your website, all searching specifically for the product or service you provide.

Are you a home improvement contractor, a mechanic, or maybe a local restaurant? Perhaps you're a regional distributor of commercial appliances, or a national manufacturer of packaging supplies. Imagine all the customers searching for your products and services right now, but going to your competitors instead. Imagine if they could be your customers tomorrow, and the day after that, and the day after that! That's what PPC can do for your business.

Fixed Cost

With a dynamic, auction based pricing system you might think PPC advertising costs fluctuate unpredictably from month to month. But actually, that's hardly the case when a PPC campaign is setup correctly.

The search engines provide you with tools to limit settings for cost per click and daily budgets. What this allows you as the advertiser to do is provide a cost ceiling and create a fairly predictable monthly advertising budget. Keyword bids and placement will be automatically adjusted to fit your set budget by the PPC ad platform.

To take this a step further, there are many third-party tools available to integrate with search engines that allow cost and budget controls to be even more precise than those controls provided directly by the search engines.

Bid optimization platforms offer several advantages. For example, keyword bid adjustment based on best practices can be a bit of a tedious task to complete. That's where bid optimization software comes in to play. These types of tools monitor bids and activity, and adjust individual keyword bids to remain competitive or fit within your budget.

Oftentimes bid optimization tools can even be set to target a desired cost per lead or cost per product sold. With the right feedback mechanisms in place, these tools can help deliver a very reliable and consistent cost per acquisition.

For instance, a dental practice looking for new patients might be willing to spend \$100 to acquire a new lifetime client. With some understanding about PPC best practices, an optimization platform will experiment with keywords, bids, and placement so that \$100 average per lead is maintained.

These systems will also learn which keywords are more likely to drive traffic that converts into customers. Over time, the optimization algorithms will begin to focus more of your budget on those keywords. That way you're always receiving the most value for your PPC spend.

This type of optimization combined with a set monthly budget creates a predictable fixed cost for PPC.

Target Keywords That Are Difficult to Rank For

Ads reach a target demographic (location, interests, income, age, etc) via selected keywords, bids, and ad settings within the publisher's ad platform.

A high organic search engine ranking via SEO is the gold standard, but that's an overwhelming task to achieve for a multitude of keywords as each keyword needs a top ranked website page and the website's presence for each keyword needs to be extensive. With PPC there is no overwhelming barrier to the number of keywords with a high-ranking search engine ad; all that is needed is an optimized landing page for each keyword and a sufficient budget for the ad.

So a practical approach to search marketing is to prioritize a limited number of keywords for SEO for top organic ranking, then supplement with PPC advertising to dominate search engine listings for high priority keywords. That way you'll create a multi-position search engine presence for high priority keywords plus gain coverage for a multitude of lower priority keywords.

You also don't have to worry so much about how long it'll take you to naturally rank for a competitive term. As long as you are properly managing your PPC, you'll quickly be listed on page one.

Laser Target Ads

A properly setup PPC campaign will contain ads that are extremely relevant to the specific product or service you're trying to promote. More searchers will be converted into customers if your keywords, ad text, and landing page work in harmony.

Writing specific ads that properly target the intended audience will improve your performance tremendously. You can use your ad text as a door man, directing qualified customers to your website. This is important since you don't want to pay for a click on your ad unless there's a good chance it will turn into a customer.

General search terms are called 'short tail' keywords and are usually one or two words long. Specific search terms are called 'long tail' keywords that are usually three or more words long. For competitive reasons, it's costly to rank high for short tail keywords, but easier with lower cost per click for niche long tail keywords.

Let's use home mortgage loans as an example. Sure, there are many searches for home loans as a general term, but a customer in the buying cycle is searching for something much more specific. He is searching for a fixed-rate 30-year mortgage, a five-year ARM loan, a 5% down home loan, or home refinance with low APR.

These specific search terms combined with an ad that specifically speaks to that search will engage the searcher at a higher rate. When that searcher clicks on an ad and is directed to a website page that gives him specific details about the type of loan he searched, you've set up the best possible scenario to obtain a new customer.

Furthermore, a nationwide bank with many locations in specific cities should also target ads geographically. A person searching for a loan will be even more comfortable clicking on an ad if it mentions their specific city.

Remember, you only have seconds to convince a searcher that they should click on your ad. You want to make it as obvious as possible that a searcher will find exactly what they're looking for if they choose to visit your site.

Mobile Search is Vital for Local Businesses

Mobile search simply refers to a search done on a mobile phone. A large portion of locals searching via mobile device 'walk through the door' and a big chunk of that foot traffic ends up buying something.

If you're a local business that relies on people visiting you in order to make a sale, then you're among the group of advertisers that can benefit the most from the increasing use of mobile search. According to a study by AT&T Interactive and Nielsen, the most mobile searched for businesses are:

- Restaurants
- Entertainment Venues
- Retail Shops
- Grocery
- Travel
- Automotive
- Health and Beauty

The CTR for mobile ads is extremely high:²

- Ad for a trusted brand = 36% CTR
- Ad for a deal or coupon = 33% CTR
- Ad for an item close to what was searched for = 31% CTR

(Note that the CTR for Computer based PPC ads or banner ads is typically <2%)

These types of businesses can extensively leverage local PPC traffic, because they can target people using their mobile phones. Due to the growth of mobile connectivity, Google recently upgraded its AdWords platform to make it easier to differentiate and manage PPC ads aimed at various devices.

AdWords Enhanced Campaigns

Google recently launched an update to AdWords that includes the capability to increase keyword bids when someone is searching within a close radius of a business's location.

AdWords Enhanced Campaigns are designed to help make PPC campaigns more efficient by expanding them across the many platforms people use to search (PCs, smartphones and tablets). Before, AdWords revolved around searcher intent; with Enhanced Campaigns, your ads capture intent and context.

For example, a sushi restaurant probably wants to target searchers within 5 miles of the restaurant during the dinner rush. With Enhanced Campaigns, the sushi place can launch a single campaign that reaches all devices and increase bids by 25% for customers who are searching on a smartphone within 5 miles from the restaurant between 5pm-8pm, or decrease bids by 30% during hours they're closed. Enhanced Campaigns give the sushi restaurant a better opportunity to grab customers who are nearby and hungry!

Even better, Google ads show your address and phone number so customers can easily get directions.

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