

2ND  
EDITION



# DIGITAL MINDS

12 Things Every Business Needs  
to Know About Digital Marketing





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to Know About Digital Marketing

*SECOND EDITION*

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

WSI would like to acknowledge the Consultants who contributed to the 2nd edition of this book. Without their valuable time and effort, an updated and revised version of *Digital Minds* would not have been possible.

Also, a special thanks to anyone who read, shared and promoted the 1st edition of this book. It is because of you that *Digital Minds* has become the highly regarded marketing book that it is and is why we wanted to ensure we brought you the latest “things you need to know about digital marketing” with this 2nd edition.





**INTRODUCTION:  
AN EVOLVING WORLD**

---

*By Dan Monaghan*

The passage of time and growth of our world - its people, the environment and our technology - is a remarkable occurrence. For parents, watching a baby grow into an adult happens in the blink of an eye. Builders erect skyscrapers and condominiums faster than you think is possible. Companies like Tesla, with their electric cars and lithium-ion batteries, are changing the way our society perceives automobiles and energy. And the rate at which these fundamental shifts become realities increases with each passing year.

Don't worry, the book you are reading is about digital marketing, but I mention the way the world is changing because digital marketing and the Internet are at the core of these monumental innovations.

WSI has been around for more than 20 years, which is even longer than Google, so I like to tell a story about when we first started the company. By the mid-1990s, the Internet had started to gain traction. It was nowhere near what it is today or even ten years ago, but it was growing, and we saw an opportunity. We flew around the world evangelizing the Internet and convincing people to start paying attention to it.

When we had a room full of people, we'd ask them to take out their business cards and give a show of hands if they had a fax number on the card. Back then most hands went up. But when we asked this same question five years ago, there were noticeably fewer hands raised. And today? It's only the older generations who may keep a fax number on their card. In fact, if you were to ask some of your employees in the Millennial generation, they may not even know what a fax machine is or where to locate it in the office. And if you thought that was big shift in technology behavior you should have seen the blank stares and confused faces I'd get back in the mid-1990s, early 2000s when I'd say, "In the future, every one of you will have an email address on your business card."

Here's what happened: the Internet and email developed at warp speed, and with it came social media, blogging, and the entire industry we now call digital marketing. No matter what business or industry you're in, digital marketing, which exists in a perpetually changing state, is vital to your success.

## Harnessing the Power of Digital Marketing

One of the biggest misconceptions about digital marketing is that it's only important for Internet or tech companies, or people with coding and design experience. Harnessing the power of digital marketing is a priority for every business. In fact, 75% of the digital economy is delivered by traditional companies in traditional industries.

I'll be honest: digital marketing is complex; it's important to every kind of company out there, but it's complex. In all likelihood, you'll need strategic help to successfully leverage digital marketing (especially if you don't have tech-savvy people or marketers in your organization).

This is where WSI, the largest digital marketing agency network in the world, steps in to be your digital marketing guide. We not only understand the complexities of digital marketing, we also realize the challenges traditional companies face when they try to implement digital marketing themselves. These are the reasons we wrote our first book, *Digital Minds: 12 Things Every Business Needs to Know About Digital Marketing*, an Amazon best seller. In the two years since *Digital Minds'* publication, the digital world has shifted; the old version remains useful, but we believe this updated and revised edition reflects just how quickly the digital world moves.

A critical component of digital marketing most companies overlook is strategy. Since businesses are often in a rush to catch up with the latest digital marketing trend, strategy is pushed aside. If you take one point from this book, let it be the following: do not forego the development of a digital strategy. To back this up, here's a look at WSI's Digital Strategy Map. It was designed to show

businesses how many different paths one can take on the journey to defining a comprehensive and results-oriented digital marketing strategy. For a larger, full-color view of the map and some more details around how to navigate it, please visit [www.wsiworld.com/digital-strategy-map](http://www.wsiworld.com/digital-strategy-map).

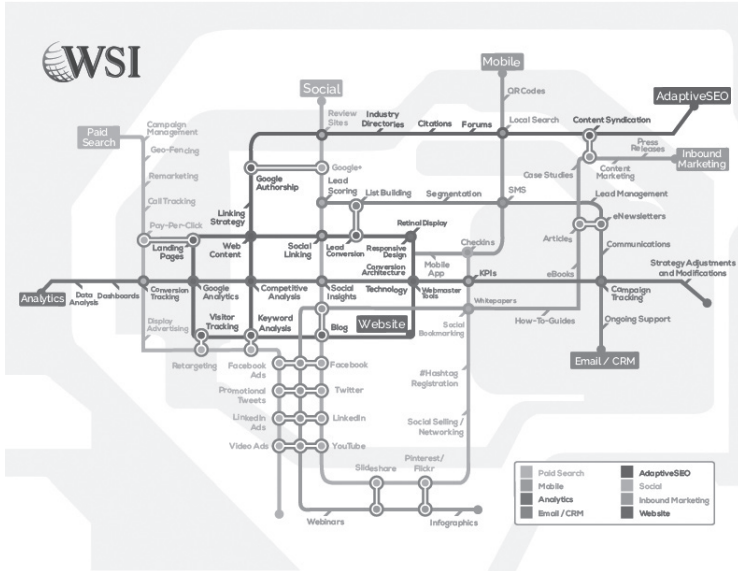


Figure 1: WSI's Digital Strategy Map

There's no shortage of complexity, with many elements overlapping or depending on the other in order to succeed. But, as with even the most complicated subway systems, if you follow the map, you'll get wherever you need to go!

At the center of the map is your website, which needs to be user-friendly, graphically appealing and most importantly, optimized for mobile devices. It's shocking how many businesses don't have a professional, mobile-ready website, even though it's easier than ever to implement

one. With mobile-friendliness being a big part of Google's algorithm, which now essentially penalizes sites not optimized for mobile, a high-quality website is a requirement, not an option. Your website is the nucleus of your digital marketing activities.

Every other tactic on the Digital Strategy Map, each with a chapter later in this book, revolve around or lead back to your website. As a whole, the Digital Strategy Map represents opportunities for your business. When you consult the map and begin to piece together a strategy - whether it's on your own or with professional help - you're gaining a significant edge on your competitors.

It might sound simple, but thinking and strategizing about digital marketing before taking action is difficult, effective and just plain smart. Just like in life, where it's a good idea to think before you act, a little consideration goes a long way in the digital marketing realm. It'll save you marketing dollars, increase your return on investment and streamline your digital marketing process.

The rest of this book serves as a guide for helping you and your business understand what you want to accomplish with digital marketing. Whether you end up working with WSI or somebody else, remember to start from the top with a broad sense of your goals and strategy, and then work down into the tactics. The old saying rings true, even for digital marketing: measure twice, cut once!



# 1

## **COMPETITOR ANALYSIS: YOUR ROAD MAP TO WINNING THE WEB WAR**

---

*By Peter Jasniewski*

Imagine you are an Army General preparing your forces for a big battle. Where do you start? Do you know where all the enemy lines are? How strong are your opponents' forces? How many ground troops? Who supports them? There are many questions that need answers before you can develop a battle plan – and a winning strategy.

Today's web reminds me of a battlefield. The battles fought in the digital mine fields are real, the competitors are legitimate and the rewards of winning web wars are tangible.

The importance of a sound strategy and competitive research in the digital marketing world cannot be overestimated. Surprisingly, too many companies go into the battle without knowing anything about their competitors and, even worse, they sometimes commit to large budgets just to confront their assumptions with the real world, and end up flushing their hard-earned dollars down the drain.

A much smarter approach is to analyze, prepare, and plan before the first marketing dollar is spent on a digital campaign. Preservation of marketing budgets, focus on return on investment (ROI), and the creation of predictable strategies based on a true competitor analysis, as well as a digital marketing plan leading to web victories, are the purposes of this chapter.

Digital marketing has revolutionized how businesses create and gain visibility, build and maintain their reputation, find new business opportunities, and cultivate long-term relationships with their audience. Digital marketing is recognized as the most cost-effective form of marketing with measurable ROI.

There are several reasons why a competitor analysis is crucial to a digital marketing strategy:

- Markets and competitive landscapes always change
- Players and people within specific industries change
- There is a clear shift to a younger generation of decision makers familiar with digital marketing
- Majority of purchasing decisions are based on previous online research
- It's easy to adapt to change by adjusting your digital strategy to ever-changing requirements



- Transparent tracking and measurement of marketing spend and results
- Ability to target specific geographies and buyer personas

Simply put, a competitor analysis is your road map to a digital marketing plan that will help you win the web war.

## **What is a Competitor Analysis?**

Companies of all sizes compete every day for business opportunities and new qualified leads. Brand awareness, online reputation, and the never-ending desire to communicate and stay in touch with your audience require more and more refined approaches. The ongoing desire to get ahead of the competition and to uncover their strategies and tactics creates an urgent need for professional competitive research and analysis as the foundational intelligence for a digital marketing plan.

A competitor analysis is an in-depth review of a wide range of web data and its interpretation that reveals your online competitors and their digital marketing strategies and tactics, as well as their strengths and weaknesses in comparison to your own products or services.

The resulting digital marketing plan creates the most efficient path to compete on the web and to win. The competitor analysis allows you to gain the market and competitive information you need to make the right decisions and eclipse your web competition.

## **How Competitive is Your Industry?**

In the many years of my digital marketing practice, I have yet to meet a business owner who did not claim to be in an extremely competitive industry. If you ask a Realtor, a mortgage broker, a car dealer, a general contractor, a restaurant owner, a roofer, a plumber, a yoga trainer, a marketing consultant, a financial advisor, a printer, a promo material reseller, an IT specialist, a business coach, an insurance agent...you get the idea - they will all tell you that their industry is the most competitive business on the planet. And, strangely enough, they will all be right in a way. These days, it's difficult to find a unique niche with little or no competition.

What is left is to brace yourself for a good fight and to do whatever is necessary to outsmart your competition. To be better, more compelling, more relevant, more engaging, more persuasive, more trustworthy; this is what it means to be competitive in the digital realm. And what about the price of the product or service? I deeply believe that price is a selling feature only in the absence of value.

Every second somebody decides to give their business to someone, somewhere.

And there is no second place; the winner takes it all! You better know exactly how your competitors are trying to be the winners.

Humans conduct billions of searches every day and the online competition is getting stiffer each year.

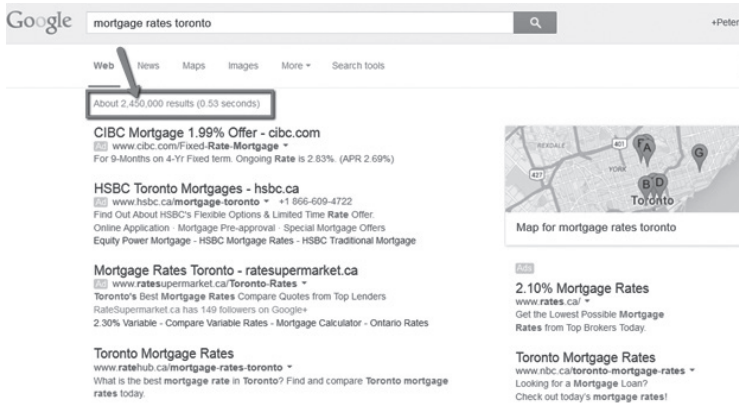
Year	Annual Number of Google Searches	Average Search Per Day
2014	2,095,100,000,000	5,740,000,000
2013	2,161,530,000,000	5,922,000,000
2012	1,873,910,000,000	5,134,000,000
2011	1,722,071,000,000	4,717,000,000
2010	1,324,670,000,000	3,627,000,000
2009	953,700,000,000	2,610,000,000
2008	637,200,000,000	1,745,000,000
2007	438,000,000,000	1,200,000,000
2000	22,000,000,000	60,000,000
1998	3,600,000 *Google official first year	9,800

*Figure 2: Annual Google Searches<sup>1</sup>*

The question of competitiveness in your industry is tricky to answer as many geographical and geopolitical factors heavily influence the competitive landscape of your particular industry and region.

For the sake of illustration, I will provide some examples from our local Toronto, Ontario market. According to the Economic Dashboard Report, Toronto is currently the fourth-largest urban agglomeration in North America, surpassed only by Mexico City, New York City, and Los Angeles. With that in mind, Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) market are quite representative and suitable to illustrate some general concepts.

Let's take a look at a mortgage broker (call her Jane), who is trying to compete for Toronto homebuyers' business:



*Figure 3: Example of a Google Search Engine Ranking Page (SERP)*

Do you see the highlighted number “2,450,000”? Don’t worry, this is not the number of mortgage brokers in Toronto! However it does represent the approximate number of individual pages stored in Google’s index, and which ones Google thinks are relevant to the search query “mortgage rates Toronto.” One website can have multiple pages ranking for the same phrase. Google and other search engines rank individual pages! The higher the relevance, quality and reputation of your content in Google’s eyes, the better the visibility or higher ranking your content earns on search engine result pages (SERPs).

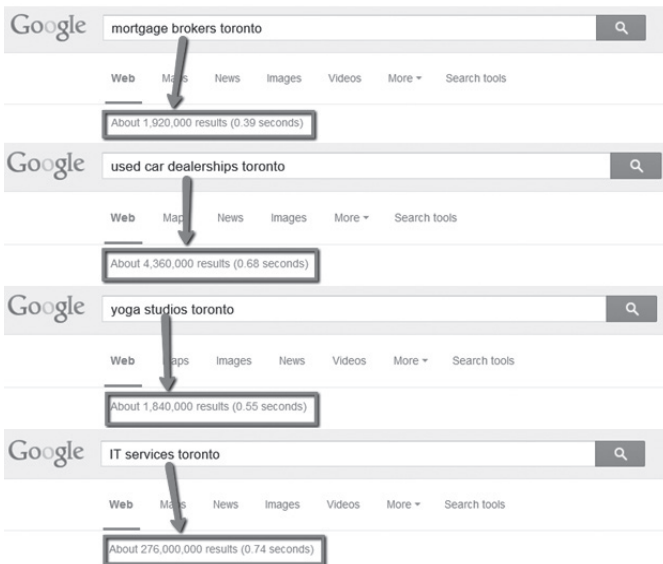
Now, would it not be important for our mortgage broker Jane to know why and how her competitors have earned the top visibility for either organic or paid search listings on Google? Would it not be intriguing to find out who her strongest online competitors are? What keyword phrases do Jane’s competitors rank for to gain visibility and boost their

relevant traffic? Why are Jane's competitors more visible than her own pages? What have they done differently?

Wouldn't it be great to see all the hidden landing pages her competitors created to generate support for very specific campaign messages? Campaigns that direct highly targeted traffic to pre-planned conversion points? Jane would probably kill, figuratively speaking, to find out how much her competitors are paying for specific competitive keywords.

If she knew all this, would it not be easier for her to come up with a plan of counterattack? This is exactly what a competitor analysis does and why it is priceless (and necessary) if you believe you are in a competitive industry.

Here are few additional numbers to illustrate the competitiveness of some selected industries:



*Figure 4: Examples of Google SERPs for Various Competitive Industries*

## **Eliminate Guesswork**

A professional competitor analysis gathers and evaluates deep data from search engines, websites, and social media platforms. The detail-rich results are presented in a series of comprehensive charts and graphs that clearly show your competitive landscape on the Internet.

### **What Kind of Data Matters?**

#### **Websites**

- Domain age
- Domain reputation
- Web presence/web properties
- Quality and standards of coding
- Responsive design to accommodate mobile devices
- Site speed optimization
- Development platform
- Programming errors
- W3C standard compliance
- Navigation structure
- Content quality and depth
- Content sharing capabilities

#### **Search Engine Optimization (SEO)**

- Top ranking keyword phrases

- Other organic keyword combinations and rankings
- Long-tail phrases
- Short-tail phrases
- Search positioning
- Search volume
- Depth of organic visibility
- Variety of organic rankings
- Backlink quality and reputation
- Content depth/number of indexed pages

**Note:** Google uses over 200 ever-changing ranking factors to decide page rankings. Certain basic principles never change though, and this is what professional SEO campaigns must primarily focus on (you can read more about SEO in Chapter 8).

### **Pay-Per-Click (PPC) and Remarketing**

- Number of individual PPC campaigns
- Ad copy per campaign
- Targeted keyword phrases
- Search volume
- Click charges
- Conversion strategies
- Messages in calls-to-action (CTA)
- Landing pages and their conversion strategies
- Conversion topics/offers

- Remarketing setup and coverage

## **Social Media**

- Social presence
- Social content positioning
- Content sharing capabilities
- Social impact
- Social visibility
- Social intensity
- User participation
- User engagement
- Social creativity
- Social conversion strategies

A professional competitor analysis will also include your cost of customer acquisition, so you can stop guessing and start competing.

## **Who Do You Compete With?**

Almost every business owner has at least one well-known “across-the-street” competitor. This is okay if it is just a friendly competition, but once it turns into a life mission to beat the opponent at any cost, it may blind you and make you overlook the real digital competition.

There are significant differences in the B2B and B2C arenas, especially in retail, where mobile and location-based strategies can bring competitive advantages and



become the winning approach. For all firms, especially those in B2B business, competitive research must focus on digital competition. Some brick-and-mortar competitors may have a poor or non-existent online presence, and if this is the case, they should be eliminated from the competitor analysis process, even if this is the most despised competitor from across the street.

In order for us to come up with a list of your real direct and indirect online competitors, we first must identify, in an unbiased way, the strongest online players who are ‘stealing your rankings’ and scooping ‘your’ opportunities.

Through many real-life competitor analysis cases, we have devised a simple yet effective way to identify the strongest players in a specific industry.

Without going into too much tactical detail, this process involves thorough initial keyword research to identify the most strategic keyword phrases, then obtaining real search results through pinging search engines, and a summary of rankings using an assigned point system (10 points for rank #1, 9 points for rank #2, etc.). The point tally across a multitude of targeted keyword phrases returns the true competitive ranking and a list of the top 10 competitors. For more competitive industries, a higher number of competitors should be investigated.

Once we have identified who is it we are competing against we can move on with the in-depth research of their strategies and tactics.

## **What Do You Compete For?**

Ultimately everybody competes for leads and opportunities. But things are a little more complex online. Your digital presence and your competitive strategy must address the needs of your potential prospects or clients at various stages of their purchasing decision.

You compete for:

1. Brand Visibility
2. Content Discoverability
3. Trust
4. Relevancy
5. Engagement
6. Conversions and Leads

## **Competitive Benchmarking**

Benchmarking is an ongoing process of comparing your own digital performance against your identified main online competitors. There are multiple components of benchmarking, so the focus should be on the metrics most relevant to your industry and geography.

One of the reasons benchmarking is a critical component of every competitor analysis is an attempt to create an ‘apples-to-apples’ environment by defining measurable and meaningful metrics. Trying to identify best-of-breed reference points allows us to identify gaps between competitors and to come up with the most effective action plan.

Competitive benchmarking means ongoing monitoring. I recommend at least quarterly competitive analysis to satisfy the needs of reliable ongoing benchmarking.

Competitive benchmarking is one of the custom elements of each competitor analysis, but here are some general considerations as well:

### **Website Benchmarking**

There are many diagnostic tools on the market allowing you to check the health of your website. Some of these tools allow quick comparisons of the major web components. WSI's Webscan, for example, is a comprehensive diagnostic tool designed to assess on-page and off-page factors. It also allows for direct comparisons of various websites and checks web benchmarks from various angles. A periodic Webscan report (or similar) allows you to quickly detect changes in your competitive landscape.

### **Content Benchmarking**

A good measure of content quality and depth is a periodic benchmarking check of your competitors' content changes. Some free tools, like Google Alerts or Google site index check, can provide immediate insights into your competitor's content changes.

### **Content Discoverability Benchmarking**

Brand content discoverability is reflected in the ranking coverage for each particular domain. Due to ongoing content updates in your competitive surroundings, as well as search engine algorithmic updates, it is critical

to periodically check and benchmark your rankings and those of your competitors. Being aware of your progress or decline is good, but knowing the competitor's development versus your own property is much more important.

### **Paid Advertisement Benchmarking**

For the purpose of competitive benchmarking, a constant review of your competitor's paid advertising activities can bring an immediate return. Due to its nature, paid advertising is instant and much more dynamic than any other form of digital marketing. Be sure you are up-to-date with your competitor's PPC activity as it can pay big dividends for your efforts. Neglect paid advertising benchmarking and your competitors will thank you for looking the other way!

### **Social Presence and Activity Benchmarking**

Social benchmarking could become your secret weapon, as many organizations still do not take full advantage of social communication and social technologies. Social benchmarking can be as simple as becoming a follower of your competitor's brands, or just monitoring their social activity. Ongoing monitoring is tremendously beneficial, as you may uncover a competitor's hidden weaknesses.

### **Backlink Benchmarking**

A site's backlink profile has been an important Google ranking factor from day one. The quality and reputation of links pointing back to your domain may be one of the deciding factors for your overall search engine visibility. Backlink benchmarking can help your efforts to improve

your backlink profile and to uncover new potential referring domains to earn your new quality backlinks.

### **Other Considerations:**

- Check overall changes in visual appearance of your competitors' web properties (web and social)
- Monitor changes in marketing messaging, which may indicate strategy, product, or service changes
- Constantly look for new products, new services, and new price announcements
- Be aware of any seasonal promotions
- Any business expansions or changes in your competitor's geo-target
- Any changes to key personnel executive team
- Any additions to their project/case study portfolio
- Any new inbound/outbound advertising and/or corporate communications

## **The Inside Scoop on Your Competition**

Strategic research means your competitor analysis must be more than just numbers. It has to clearly reveal strategies and tactics that your online competition is using to gain brand visibility, win trust, engage, and convert.

It has to be coupled with a professional interpretation of the results to understand how your competitors try to win the hearts and minds of their potential clients. It also has to

show which paths lead to the best conversions, the ultimate goal of any professional marketing plan.

One of the most exciting parts of the process is the analysis of your competitor's unique selling proposition (USP). Surprisingly, very few companies place enough attention on creating a compelling USP and communicating it effectively.

A USP is a critical part of your brand identity, summarizing the value proposition and the unique reason why consumers should choose you over your competition.

Get the USP right and you are halfway there to compelling your audience to discover your brand through search, social or mobile visibility. Ignore it and you will have to invest more effort to communicate your message and persuade your prospects to trust you and take action.

## **Great Examples of Killer USPs**

Revlon never pitched makeup; instead they have always sold hope ("Love is on"), according to Revlon's founder Charles Revson.

Walmart is known to sell bargains. FedEx positioned themselves to be the most reliable courier service ("When it absolutely, positively has to be there overnight.").

AVIS – "We're number two. We try harder" – is a wonderful example of how to turn a seemingly negative fact into a compelling USP.

TOMS came up with an ingenious One-for-One USP that turned their business into one of the most recognizable and successful shoe brands among youth, their target audience.

## Conversion Strategies

The last, but certainly not the least, component of a professional competitor analysis is the conversion strategy applied by your competitors to deliver their messages and to compel their audience to take specific actions.

What are the key calls-to-action (CTA) on your competitors' page? What other CTAs are used on the inside pages? How long is the path to conversion? Maybe they request action right in the main Home Page banner?

### Typical Calls-To-Action

- Request a Quote
- Request a Free Consultation
- Call us for a Free Estimate
- Emergency Calls: 24/7 Response
- Submit
- Try Risk-Free for 30 days
- Give a Gift
- Sponsor Our Noble Cause
- Join Our Community
- Talk To Us
- Let's Do It!
- Get a FREE Widget
- Give it a Try FREE for 60 Days!
- Be Awesome! Do it!

- Yes, Take Me There!
- Subscribe and Stay Informed!
- Be in the Know – Subscribe Now!
- Yes, I Want Your Daily Free Tips!

The list of CTA variations is endless. Entire teams of digital marketers constantly test the effectiveness of various CTA versions in connection with other messages on landing pages.

Simple understanding of what messaging and conversion strategy your competitors are applying can become a treasure chest for your own marketing ideas. It can also help determine the research competitors have conducted. Smart marketers learn from each other. Smart marketers watch carefully to see what the other guys are doing and try to do it better. Marketing is all about ongoing testing, but testing can be accelerated through smart research, like a competitor analysis.

## **Conclusion**

The main reasons why a competitor analysis investment is worth every penny are the lessons learned from your competitors' strengths and weaknesses, and the tangible rewards you get from the implementation of your resulting digital marketing plan.

A digital marketing plan built on competitor analysis findings will be tailored to your specific competitive landscape and situation, and all the guesswork will be taken out of the equation.



You may have plenty of reasons to want to conduct a competitor analysis. Maybe you just want to know what your competition is doing; maybe you have plans to launch a brand new, state-of-the-art website; maybe you want to set benchmarking points and work toward the best-of-breed in your industry; maybe you want to become a trendsetter in your niche, and you need a sound marketing plan to increase your online visibility and lead generation.

Regardless of the reasons for doing it in the first place, a competitor analysis is only meaningful if you follow up with concrete and adequate actions. The digital space is a fascinating place to be and the battle for consumer attention is both challenging and exciting. No matter how you define victory, competitive research is a huge part of winning the web war.



# 2

## WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT: SEVEN STEPS TO SUCCESS

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*By Chris Schofield*

For more than a decade, my team and I have been involved in website development. Just from my WSI office, more than five hundred projects have been successfully delivered. We have witnessed the emergence of and developed for Web 1.0 (the information web), Web 2.0 (the collaborative and shared web), Web 3.0 (semantic and big data web), and we eagerly await Web 4.0.

Why write about website development you ask? Old hat, boring, flat and uninteresting are words that may spring to mind when you think web development. Besides, the new web is all about apps and cool stuff, isn't it? Sure it is, but a well-designed, compelling, converting website is also the

hub of any high-performance digital marketing strategy. The success of major marketing automation companies like HubSpot and Marketo bear testament to this.

This chapter is written to help guide you through the “Seven Steps to Success” required to ensure your website becomes the center and driving force behind your digital marketing strategy.

## **Step 1: Discovery**

Many business owners know they need a new website but they have no idea where to begin. Before you start soliciting offers from design agencies and developers spend a good amount of time, preferably with the help of a trained consultant, analyzing what you need. Quality work at the beginning will pay dividends in the end! This all comes back to our advice of measure twice, cut once.

### **What Kind of Site Do You Need?**

Here’s a list of some of the most popular types of websites WSI has developed for clients over the years.

*Personal Website:* Non-business perhaps for an individual or family that wants to share information on the web.

*Social Sharing Website:* Could be for a business, non-profit or an individual. The purpose is for users to communicate and interact. Can be used as an effective way to promote a business or an important source of valuable data.

*Publishing/Blog Website:* Provides a platform for authors, writers, and bloggers. Often includes biographies of publishers and categories of subject matter.

*Digital Community Website:* These relate to digital communities rather than physical communities. They are used by people for social interaction and discussion of mutual interests. Also a valuable source of valuable data.

*Specific Mobile Website:* Needed when your target audience is found on mobile devices. Developed to provide the required information to the user with minimum navigation.

*Mobile App Website:* Not to be confused with a “native app”. An app website is run from a hosted application and not from within the mobile device. Usually cheaper to maintain, content can be modified on a mobile app website quickly without having to update and issue native app code.

*Bookings Website:* Could be a travel, flights, and hotel booking website, or a restaurant, food delivery or taxi service. These websites are connected to and integrated with one of the large industry specific booking engines such as Kayak or Synxis.

*Directory Website:* The digital equivalent of the old fashioned Yellow Pages. Often used to classify and promote business services within specific geographic areas.

*Marketing Brochure Website:* Used mainly as digital brochures and catalogs. Can be produced, maintained and distributed at a fraction of the cost of printed media.

*Information Website:* Designed to inform users. The largest of this type of site is, of course, Wikipedia. However,

businesses that create relevant and useful information can attract visitors that may then be converted into customers.

*eCommerce Website:* Levels the playing field so a small company can compete with larger companies. Do not underestimate the expense and resource requirement to maintain this sort of site though, as it can be significant.

*Regulated Industry Website:* Banking, insurance, pharmaceutical and other regulated industries are required to ensure their website content is compliant with certain regulations that govern their industry. These companies require their websites to include a content management system that has an approval process built in so that compliance departments can approve content before it is published.

## **Who Is Your Audience?**

No matter what kind of web development project you plan, you need to think about the type of people you are trying to reach. In my experience this important factor makes a major contribution to the eventual success of a project. But it's an area that's often ignored by companies when planning and implementing a new website project.

Conducting a buyer persona analysis will help you outline who your consumers are and who you need to ensure your website caters to. We talk more about the importance of defining your buyer personas in Chapter 4 (Content Marketing). In the meantime, here's a quick definition of what we mean by a buyer persona:

*A buyer persona is a semi-fictional representation of your ideal customer based on market research and real data about your*

*existing customers. When creating your buyer persona(s), consider including customer demographics, behavior patterns, motivations, and goals.<sup>2</sup>*

## **What is the Primary Goal?**

Your website may have many marketing objectives that it needs to deliver on. But it's important to have one primary goal in mind to help you prioritize tasks and focus your efforts.

Here are some of the most common ones:

*Acquire New Customers:* If the primary role of your website is to acquire new customers, a lot of planning needs to go into the usability of the site (including navigation across different devices). Branding, presentation of information and graphics design (including imagery) are also important. Information is used to tell customers about products or services. The website should be maintained, updated and regarded as a primary sales tool.

*Improve Visitor Conversions:* A visitor conversion occurs when a user completes the action you've directed them to take, such as: subscribe to an email campaign, make a purchase online, download a whitepaper, view a video, subscribe to a service, complete an online form, write a review, complete a quiz, provide feedback or complete some other action. The important thing to remember is in order to measure and manage conversions, you must define the conversion criteria at the beginning so you can ensure you have the proper conversion paths built into your site. You'll also want to assign a value (in currency) to a conversion.

Once the site is launched and spend is occurring on marketing, then an ROI can be calculated from the marketing expense and conversion value. You can also use your web analytics tool to capture your conversion goals that allow you to manage and improve campaign performance based on the conversion values you are seeing.

*Retain Existing Customers:* It's a fact that through normal attrition most companies lose customers every year. Percentages may vary, but all business owners know it costs more money to recruit a new customer than it does to retain an old one. Retention strategies can be powerful and may include things like personalized content, cookies to make future visits more efficient, loyalty offers, frequent communication, excellent customer service, social interaction and other compelling strategies.

*Generate Revenue via Bookings, Banners, and Advertising:* Affiliate websites require time and energy. There's an initial investment required to build a platform and even more investment in marketing is required to drive large volumes of targeted traffic to the site which needs to convert visitors to generate a reasonable income. Industry standard conversion rates vary, but a good rule of thumb is between 3% and 5%. So if a site does well then one visitor in twenty will convert. To be profitable, the cost of attracting a visitor must be balanced with the commission paid on conversion plus the cost of setting up and managing the enterprise.



## Step 2: Budget

I have used this article many times in my business life; it's amazing how its words ring true through the ages. It's also amazing that many business people don't appear to understand this basic law of business!

*The Common Law of Business Balance – John Ruskin  
1819 - 1900:*

*It's unwise to pay too much, but it's worse to pay too little. When you pay too much, you lose a little money - that's all. When you pay too little, you sometimes lose everything, because the thing you bought was incapable of doing the thing it was bought to do. The common law of business balance prohibits paying a little and getting a lot - it can't be done. If you deal with the lowest bidder, it is well to add something for the risk you run, and if you do that you will have enough to pay for something better.*

The budget you allocate to your website project must take into account the cost, plus an anticipated return on investment and a timescale required for a reasonable return on investment.

A website budget must include:

- The cost of internal resources required to support the project from discovery to completion, and management of the project after launch.
- The cost of external resources such as consultants, designers, developers, media production,

copywriting, hosting, ongoing support, maintenance, and marketing.

Costs may vary, depending on the size of the project, from a few thousand to maybe tens or even hundreds of thousands. If you aren't able to support your website project with a sufficient budget you may need to reconsider what it is you are trying to achieve in the first place.

### **Step 3: Planning**

When it comes to planning the technical elements of your website project, you need to have the following technology considerations in mind.

#### **Multiple Display Types**

The first thing to remember is that users will access your website using a multitude of devices and this needs to be planned for. Display screens vary in size enormously and the most common screen sizes are:

- Desktops and laptops: 15-21 inches
- Tables: 7-10 inches
- Smartphones: 4-7 inches
- Televisions: 5-100 inches!

Make sure your project gives the user the best possible experience on whatever device they use.

## Platforms

There are many good products available in the marketplace, some are free to use (Open Source) and some have fees. When it comes to determining which website platform you are coming to use, here is a list of options:

- Free Website Builder (often from ISP or host)
- Simple HTML Site (Dreamweaver)
- Basic CMS (Open Source)
- Advanced CMS (Open Source)
- Full Custom (Custom Coded)

An appropriate site platform is chosen based on the scope of the project and required functionality. The decision on which one will work best for your website project is something your IT department or a digital marketing consultant can guide you on.

## Responsive Design

Given Google's emphasis on mobile-friendly sites, I recommend responsive design no matter what your industry or goal. Responsive design is a method for building websites that uses advanced code to automatically resize, reposition, show and hide content according to the screen size of the user. So if a customer were to start viewing your website from their laptop then jump to their smartphone, the quality of their user experience should be the same regardless of what device they are on. In the figure on the next page we show how a website should automatically adjust across various devices when built to be responsive.



*Figure 5: Demonstrating the Concept of Responsive Design*

## **Responsive Design + Mobile Site**

Some projects use responsive for desktop, laptop and tablet use, and a separate mobile site for phone use. This is best suited if you have a web app designed for phones only. The drawback with this is that you have two sets of content to maintain.

## **Mobile Only Site**

If the site is targeted at mobile users only, then a mobile site may be appropriate. These sites are relatively rare but are growing in number.

## **Retina Display Ready**

More people are now buying devices that include high-resolution screens.

Retina display is a marketing term developed by Apple to refer to devices and monitors that have a resolution and pixel density so high – roughly 300 or more pixels per inch – that a person is unable to discern the individual pixels at a normal viewing distance. They essentially work by cramming more pixels per inch (PPI) onto the display.

In practice, Apple has converted a device's display to retina by doubling the number of pixels in each direction, quadrupling the total resolution. This increase creates a sharper interface at the same physical dimensions. In principle, a retina display is as good - or at least, as high-resolution - as a screen could ever need to be, since increasing the resolution wouldn't be noticeable by the average human eye.

Steps must be taken in the planning and development stage to ensure images are properly sized and that other graphics are prepared in the right way. Logos and icons, for example, may have to be converted to scalable vector graphic format (SVG).

## **Content Delivery Networks**

According to Wikipedia:

*A content delivery network or content distribution network (CDN) is a large distributed system of servers deployed in multiple data centers across the Internet. The goal of a CDN is to serve content to end-users with high availability and high performance. CDNs serve a large fraction of the Internet content today, including web objects (text, graphics and scripts), downloadable objects (media files, software, and documents), applications (eCommerce, portals), live streaming media, on-demand streaming media, and social networks.*

Almost every project that we deliver now is connected to a CDN. The main advantage is the page speed and image load time. However, there are other very useful premium services offered by suppliers such as “zero downtime” (for eCommerce this is a must as downtime costs money) and “denial of service” attack protection (required for high profile sites such as government agencies) at very reasonable prices.

## **Hosting**

When it comes to hosting, you get what you pay for. Physical resources include disk space, CPU allocation, memory and bandwidth use, systems backup and recovery, plus the quality of infrastructure within the data center. The most important factors, in my opinion, are uptime and true 24/7/365 support. The cheap hosting suppliers offer the poorest resources, oldest infrastructure and in a

lot of cases non-existent support. You can't afford a cheap hosting company!

These are the things I look for in a hosting company:

*Security of Data Center:* Multi-tiered security measures to ensure the physical security of your data, including 24/7/365 professional security, video surveillance, biometric retinal scanning and a mantrap entry point.

*Location:* Located in an area with a relatively stable climate and is free from threats of natural disasters.

*Power:* UPS (Uninterruptible Power Supply) systems for protection against power spikes and outages backed up by diesel generators. Onsite fuel reserves to provide multiple days of uninterrupted availability.

*Network:* Complete network redundancy at all key points to ensure uninterrupted connections, from ISPs, peers, border routers and core routers.

*Audit:* Audited by an external body to ensure that procedures and controls are formally and thoroughly reviewed.

*Size of Plan:* The size of hosting plans is determined by the physical resources that are required to run the application. The number of visitors that use the site every day plus the size (in terms of data) and number of pages that are viewed are the main factors to take into account. Small sites can sit comfortably on a "shared" low cost hosting plan. However, hosting costs can climb dramatically if a virtual or dedicated servers are required. Large applications may need a group of servers.

## **Site Architecture**

Use a program such as PowerPoint to create an organization chart. Home page at the top with subpages arranged beneath. Include all static pages and other pages such as forms and pages with advanced functionality. Think about how site search will work and how search categories can be organized to aid the user.

## **Conversion Funnels**

A conversion funnel is a group of pages that guide the user to the conversion goal. The number of funnels in a website will vary, but it's usually between two and four depending on the needs of the business.

## **Page Templates**

Websites optimized for conversion contain different page templates that are specifically designed with a purpose. Here are some of the main page templates I recommend having designed and built:

- Home page
- Product category view (eCommerce)
- Product detail view (eCommerce)
- Checkout pages (eCommerce)
- Forms
- Landing pages (with variants for A/B testing)
- Inside pages (possibly two or three styles depending on the purpose of the page)



## **Copywriting and Content Plan**

Don't underestimate the importance of this part of the project. A compelling, converting website needs a lot of good quality content that speaks to your target market and is optimized for the search engines. You can read more about how to establish an effective content marketing plan for your site in Chapter 4.

## **Image Acquisition**

High quality images and graphics can transform an ordinary website into a great website. Professional photography is always the best route to go. Stock photography can be a good option too. If you do use purchased images on your site, be sure you have the proper licensing to use them in the manner you are using them. The last thing you want is to spend all your time building a great website only to get hit by an image licensing suit. Also, remember, retina and high-resolution displays require large high-resolution images (around 250 dots per inch, or DPI).

## **SEO Considerations**

There are important technical factors, that influence SERP (search engine ranking positions), to account for when planning a new website project. The code of the site must be written in such a way to make sure the site's search engine friendly. Here are some technical SEO elements you should consider:

- Creating an HTML Sitemap page on your site
- Make sure you site is mobile-friendly

- Keep website code “clean” and easy for search spiders to index
- Page speed (search engines like sites that load fast)
- Regularly check for web server errors using Google Webmaster Tools
- Avoid flash and text contained in images

Technical SEO is an important factor that should not be overlooked and we talk a little more about this in our chapter on AdaptiveSEO™ (Chapter 8).

## **Digital Marketing Strategy**

Your website may be the center of your digital marketing strategy but there is no point in investing in a website if nobody ever sees or uses it. That’s why in conjunction with your website, you need to have a complete marketing plan prepared to include other digital tactics that are designed to reach your ideal customer, with an engaging message, delivered through the right channel at the perfect time.

## **Step 4: Design and Build**

With the planning complete, now the exciting part of the project begins. Let’s look at the various stages of designing and building your website.

### **Wireframe Development**

“Form follows function” is a principle associated with modernist architecture and industrial design in the 20th

century. The principle is that the shape of a building or object should be primarily based upon its intended function or purpose. The same applies to website projects. Design is very important, but I doubt the purpose of the project is to win a beauty contest!

Wireframe page designs should be used to develop web page ideas and concepts, without being clouded with graphics, so that the finished page is usable and effective. Important technical elements of the page, such as navigation, banners, content, conversion funnels and calls to action need to be properly positioned so that the page works correctly for the user.

Wireframes need to be produced for desktop, tablet and mobile devices so that elements can be viewed and understood across device types.

## **Graphic Design**

Almost all of the projects that we are involved with require custom graphics design. Design templates can be sourced, but it's unlikely a template design and layout will perform better than a unique design that has been produced for a specific project.

The graphics design element of a project usually starts off with about three concepts. These can be whittled down to one that can be fine-tuned to create the final design of your site.

For responsive design, it's important to remember that the same content is shared across all devices. A common mistake is to switch font faces and other page elements across devices. Keep as many common design elements

as possible across devices as this will make it easier to manage the site.

## **Site Development**

If the planning stage has been successful then the development stage should be relatively quick and easy. Important points:

- Run the project on a project management system and maintain project communications within the project management system
- Hold frequent (weekly) project meetings with all stakeholders
- Develop on a staging server
- Put the development site behind a login so that only stakeholders can see it
- Block search engines from indexing the development site using robots.txt

When the site is completed, it is important that all stakeholders review it and provide a final sign off. It is easier to implement changes when a site is in development than after it has been launched.

## **Step 5: Test and Debug**

When development is complete the website must be thoroughly tested. Technical functions need to be checked, and cross browser and cross device testing must be carried out to ensure everything is working properly.

Here are just some of the quality assurance (QA) checks we like to do at WSI before we launch every site:

*Content Check:* Conduct a full review of the site's content for spelling and grammar.

*Forms Check:* Test out all of the forms on your site by completing each form like a visitor would. Does the form submit properly? Do any errors occur? Do you get directed to a thank you page? Does the form submission go to right people/ person?

*Payment Check:* If it's an eCommerce website, process test orders and ensure all autoresponders and system emails are working.

*Page Speed:* Have your IT team or site developer run stress tests on the site to ensure it will perform at an optimal speed. Check the speed of each page using Google's online PageSpeed Insights tool to ensure your web pages load fast on all devices.

*Server Test:* Your IT team or site developer can run specific server tests to ensure there are not overall site speed and availability issues.

*Browser Check:* Test the site on various browsers (Chrome, Firefox, Safari and Explorer) to ensure there are not browser-specific issues.

*Design Check:* Have your graphic designer go through the site and ensure images are displaying properly and the correct fonts and styles are being used.

Don't underestimate the importance of this part of the process and when developing your website project plan, be sure there is enough time allocated to having all the necessary QA checks completed properly.

## **Step 6: Pre and Post Launch Activities**

Once you've thoroughly tested and debugged your site, there are still a number of elements that need to be set-up prior to launching or re-launching a website project. It's important to have a checklist of tasks to ensure an optimal user experience and no loss of existing search engine positions. These may include:

- If hosted with the website, check email accounts are properly set up
- Check all outbound links including links to social media accounts
- Implement 301 redirects, which tell search engines that page names have changed
- Change DNS or "A" record for the domain
- If eCommerce, test payment gateway with a live purchase
- Set canonical URLs (an HTML element that helps webmasters prevent duplicate content issues by specifying the "canonical" (meaning preferred) version of a web page)
- Set up Google Webmasters account
- Set up a dynamic site map on the website (dynamic

meaning that new pages added are automatically added to the site map)

- Submit site map address (including RSS Feed) to webmaster account
- Check in-site links after DNS change, and if required find and replace incorrect links
- Set upon Content Delivery Network
- Set up SSL (website security)
- Set robots.txt file
- Implement Google (or other) analytics scripts
- Implement remarketing code (if needed)

## **Step 7: Analyze and Improve**

The completion of the build and launch stages of the project are not the end but merely the beginning. All successful websites, if properly measured and managed, improve with age. With advanced analytics analysis, split testing, layout and navigation experiments, new products and new content, continuous improvement can be maintained. In doing all of this, you can also ensure your website remains the strong foundational component to your overall digital marketing strategy that it needs to be.

Please consult Chapter 12 on Analytics and Measurement for more information on how you can use marketing data to improve all elements of your digital marketing strategy, including your website.





# 3

## ECOMMERCE: A SHOPPING REVOLUTION

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*By J. Burns Smith Jr.*

Electronic commerce, or eCommerce, is the process of selling products and services online and involves digital payment processing and the use of a website with a shopping cart. For some purposes, a distinction is made between eCommerce where the purchaser is on a desktop or laptop computer and mCommerce (or mobile commerce) where the purchaser is on a smartphone or tablet. For the purposes of this discussion, we will be talking about all types of digital purchases regardless of the device being used.

## Why eCommerce?

Many businesses have adopted an eCommerce strategy to help expand their marketing reach and customer base. And because the world continues to migrate to online shopping with the ongoing growth of smartphones, this trend is only accelerating. “Retail digital commerce in the first quarter of 2015 was \$72.2 billion. That’s up 14% as compared to the same time period the year prior. Overall, digital commerce growth has outpaced offline retail growth by seven times.”<sup>3</sup> And with the types of products sold online increasing, it is no wonder consumers have come to expect every business to have an online shopping option in today’s marketplace.

Here are some other reasons why businesses have adopted eCommerce as part of their digital marketing strategy:

- Businesses with brick and mortar locations can distribute their products across a wider geography with a digital store and the upfront investment is considerably less.
- The need to keep pace with the competition and offer a similar purchasing experience to customers.
- The ability to sell a wider array of products, particularly with drop shipping.
- The methods of product delivery are becoming more creative for eCommerce from a customer service standpoint.
- Overall, giving customers the option to purchase online is good customer service.

## eCommerce Challenges

Like other digital marketing tactics, executing on an effective eCommerce strategy doesn't come without some challenges and business considerations that need to be made. Here are some of the main challenges you might experience:

- It can put pressure on your margins. How competitive your pricing is will be much more transparent to the consumer. However, many shoppers are already checking online prices while in a retail store before making an in-person purchase.
- Dealing with MAP (minimum advertised price) issues can be difficult if you are required to follow a MAP policy and your competitors do not.
- There could be challenges with aligning your digital branding with your retail store branding, particularly if you feel the need to offer separate levels of pricing.
- The product catalog must be first populated and then maintained. For products that come in different sizes and colors or products that are seasonal, this can require a significant time investment.

In regards to the product catalog, at one time, suppliers and manufacturers were not very good at providing assistance to retailers and distributors. This has changed significantly as suppliers and manufacturers have recognized the value of getting their distributors and retailers properly setup for eCommerce. These days, it is often possible to get a product feed from suppliers and manufacturers that facilitates the process of populating a product catalog. The

feeds are seldom perfect and usually require some cleanup, but they can still be a tremendous time-saver.

## **The Benefits of Selling Multichannel eCommerce**

eCommerce requires investing time and money in populating a product catalog and managing it. To maximize your ROI, consider distributing the product catalog across multiple digital selling points such as Amazon, eBay, Sears and others. With Amazon alone accounting for \$18 billion in sales in 2014, multichannel selling gets products in front of buyers. There are various software packages available that support doing this. These will not only synchronize with the various sales channels but also keep track of your inventory as you make sales across the various sales channels. The key is that you only have to login to one place to manage your online presence. Examples are ChannelAdvisor, EdaptIT Technology Solutions, ChannelGrabber, and Sellbrite.

## **How to Get Started**

### **Technology Considerations**

When selecting the eCommerce technology that makes the most sense for your business, there are a number of things that can impact your decision. Here are some of the main considerations you'll want to think about:

*Platform:* Some of the most popular options are Magento, Shopify, Bigcommerce, WooCommerce, and Volusion.

*Customization:* Will the technology meet your needs with or without customization and how much customization is required to get the functionality you want.

*Scalability:* Will the technology be scalable enough to be a system you can continue to work with as your business grows.

*Support:* Vet the level of support that is provided. Does the platform have 24-hour customer service (and does it cost extra)?

*Hosting:* Some solutions such as Bigcommerce are software as a service (SaaS) and the hosting is included. Other solutions such as Magento will require that you select a website hosting provider. One of the advantages of SaaS solutions is a free trial is often offered.

*Security:* Taking credit card information online must be secure and this will require an SSL certificate if one is not already included in your service package.

*Payment processing:* You will also need to select a payment gateway. Work with your credit card processing provider to make sure you are PCI compliant from the start. As for specific providers, PayPal pro is a good option because it allows the website to process cards directly and accept payments made via PayPal. And for the less sophisticated seller, there is some support for chargebacks and international sales not typically provided by other payment processors. However, the cost can be a little more. For the more experienced seller using both PayPal and a direct

merchant account can be more cost effective depending on the business model and average sale amount. Other options are possibly Google Wallet or Amazon Checkout.

## **Other Considerations**

*Mobile-Friendly Experience:* Responsive design is a must so your store is mobile-friendly. Many websites now receive more than half of their traffic from people on mobile devices. Having an eCommerce store that is responsive creates a favorable shopping experience that helps conversions, and Google favors responsive design in its algorithm over websites that are not mobile-friendly. If you already have an eCommerce website and it is not currently responsive, then invest in making it responsive.

*Shipping Providers:* In regards to shipping, having two carriers can be beneficial. USPS (or your regional post office service) is usually best for smaller and international packages while either FedEx or UPS is a good choice for anything over one to two pounds or when priority overnight is needed. Besides cost, the service level you receive over time should also factor into your selection of an ongoing shipping provider.

*Drop Shipping:* Look to establish relationships with manufacturers who have products that fit well with your product offering and use drop shipping. With drop shipping, you don't necessarily have to keep all the products you offer in inventory. Also, many sellers use drop shipping as a backup for their existing inventory so they don't have to keep as many items in stock.

## **eCommerce Marketing**

There are a number of things that can be done to market a digital business. Don't be overwhelmed. Rather, run pilots, evaluate the results and decide how to proceed from there. Here are some things to consider.

### **SEO**

The product catalog should be SEO-friendly so that your catalog can rank well on a product-by-product basis. Being SEO-friendly means that when you add products, SEO-friendly URLs are automatically created and completing the meta-tags is part of properly setting up products. The more widely used eCommerce platforms are now SEO-friendly. You will still want to implement a formal SEO campaign that targets more generic keyword phrases than the names of your products though.

### **Google Shopping**

Utilize Google Shopping to advertise your products. It can be the low hanging fruit of PPC, but requires that your pricing be competitive. Assuming that you have selected a sound eCommerce technology, it will be possible to set up a product feed from your website to Google Shopping so that your product offering is current in both places.

### **Remarketing**

This is a very important marketing technique for eCommerce. Investing in SEO and various forms of PPC will increase the traffic that goes to your website. Regardless

of whether they buy or not, stay in front of your website visitors while they are spending time on other popular websites with remarketing. This not only helps conversions but is also great for brand awareness.

### **Email Marketing**

Email is a cost-effective way to get specials and promotions to loyal customers. Don't wear out your subscriber list with overly frequent emails, but do provide value with the emails in the form of promotions, discounts, and new product announcements.

### **Discounts**

Coupon codes are great for incentive buying, email marketing, and remarketing programs. The better eCommerce website technologies will allow for people to redeem coupon codes when making a purchase through the shopping cart.

### **Free Shipping**

Deciding whether to offer free shipping will depend in large part on the types of products you ship as well as the distance that on average they are shipped. However, make no mistake about it, consumers love free shipping so consider it strongly as part of your marketing plan. Free shipping offerings have a significantly higher conversion rate.



## **Loyalty Program**

Implement a loyalty program and encourage loyalty by rewarding your best customers and strengthening that customer relationship. While not all types of products are necessarily conducive to a customer loyalty program, many are. Selling to existing customers can usually be done at a lower cost than acquiring new customers. The program does not have to be complicated and there are some excellent customer loyalty programs from third party vendors so that you won't have to build one from scratch.

## **Cross Selling**

Create cross-sell opportunities by mapping out the logical relationships of your products to each other so people respond to cross-selling offers. This functionality for identifying related products is included with the best eCommerce technologies.

## **Social Media**

Is important particularly if you are selling to the end consumer. While it can be more of a brand awareness tool than lead generation, it is a great way to take advantage of the social capital of your customers and your potential customers. Having a quality Facebook presence is a great first step, and Twitter is important because of hashtags. YouTube is great for product introductions, demos, and training. Other social media properties that could be part of your strategy include Google+, Instagram, and Pinterest. Keep in mind visibility in social media is great for branding but the engagement can also help with your website rankings.

Social media also offers overt advertising opportunities such as Facebook ads. Because you can target your typical customers' demographics, it can be extremely effective.

### **Marketing Automation**

Tie everything together with a good marketing automation platform that will let you achieve many of these tasks on a more automated basis and with a targeted message for each of your customer segments. HubSpot is one example of a marketing automation platform that we use a lot with our clients.

Obviously, one of the keys to the success of your marketing programs and multichannel selling efforts is going to be the competitiveness of your pricing. If your business has some distinctive competitive advantage that gives you a pricing edge against competitors for your costs and thus the price you should charge, great! However, if that is not the case, avoid the temptation to acquire business strictly on price. Competitors who charge too little for their products will eventually disappear. Maintain your pricing discipline. Fewer sales with more margin can be more profitable than more sales at a lower margin.

### **eCommerce Conversion**

While driving more qualified traffic to the website can help increase sales, it can be just as effective to focus on your conversions. Moving the conversion rate from 1.5% to 3.0% is every bit as good as doubling the traffic the website receives.

Optimizing for conversion starts with the initial design by using best practices for conversion architecture when building the website. These are simple but critical things such as the prominent placement of the business's phone number, having a privacy policy, endorsements and testimonials highlighted and most importantly to eCommerce, a user-friendly shopping cart.

From there, ongoing testing and measuring can lead to an improved conversion ratio. A/B testing where you change out elements of the website and measure the impact on conversions is one example of a testing best practice. Elements that might be tested include color schemes, images, calls to action, locations of calls to action and special offers. You can read more details about conversion in our Landing Page Optimization chapter as well.

With eCommerce, one particularly critical area of focus for conversion analysis should be the shopping cart. Using analytics, study where people abandon the shopping cart and work to lower the abandonment rate by fixing obvious problems and testing alternative messages and flows. One way to get feedback here is to use controlled focus groups and get their input on the shopping cart experience.

Invest in getting the analytics for the website set up properly including setting and measuring conversion goals to facilitate this process. As you review your data, expect to see your non-branded traffic becoming branded traffic. People may initially find the website by looking for a particular product but assuming they have a favorable shopping experience, they will probably get to the website a second time or third time by just searching with the name of your company or better yet, maybe because they saved the website under their favorites.

In measuring your results, evaluate not only what the initial sale is worth to you but also the lifetime value of acquiring a new customer. Will your customers make multiple sales and will they refer others to your business? These are important, conversion-oriented questions.

## **International eCommerce**

Is your customer base International? If so, you will want to create a multilingual website. This is a must from a conversion standpoint. If you are not selling internationally but want to do so, consider enlisting the help of the governmental agency in your state that supports economic development. There is usually an international department.

You will also want to tailor your marketing program for an international audience. Besides marketing on a multilingual basis, you will want to make sure the marketing geography you target lines up well with your market penetration goals.

## **Helpful eCommerce Add-ons**

Abandoned shopping cart saver technology is a great add-on for an eCommerce website. It comes into play when a customer begins a purchase but does not complete it. Emails will be sent to the customer to try to re-engage the customer and this will help with conversions.

A live chat operator allows people to ask questions and get a quicker response than if they asked the question via email. It also gets them a response while they are still

on the website, which will help with conversions. Phone support is also important, but many people prefer the ease of engaging a live chat operator rather than being put on hold on the phone. Also, sometimes people are shopping while at work and don't want to be overheard conducting personal business over the phone. The live chat operator is more private.

## **Manufacturers and Wholesalers**

This discussion has focused primarily on retail businesses. However, much of it is applicable to manufacturers and wholesalers if they decide to leverage eCommerce to not only sell via their traditional means but also to customers through an eCommerce website.

## **Conclusion**

Many businesses are already practicing eCommerce and more are setting themselves up to sell online every day. It is recommended that to get started you get a good setup plan in place, including an eCommerce technology you are comfortable with. Consider engaging a digital marketing consultant who specializes in eCommerce to assist you. You probably use an accountant, attorney and other legal professionals for your business; digital marketing is quite complex and constantly evolving, so the expertise of a professional also makes sense.



# 4

## CONTENT MARKETING: MAKE AN IMPRESSION

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*By Francois Muscat*

Content marketing has given small businesses the opportunity to become their own publishers of news and content. It has leveled the playing field between small and large businesses due to the fact that it's now affordable for all of us to publish and curate content. But the challenge that many businesses usually face is finding the time and developing a mindset to create a consistent flow of new, interesting information.

Competitive intelligence, which we discussed in Chapter 1, can help you become a content marketing secret agent, but there's another target audience that you need to pay an equal amount of attention to – your ideal customer.

In the past, digital marketers would make educated guesses about the type of content needed for businesses, but this strategy can be a hit-and-miss approach and it leads to creating content that is only read by a few people. In order to be successful at content marketing, you need to add value. You need to speak directly to the challenges that your ideal customer faces and help them solve these challenges – in turn, you become the go-to person for their business. There are a few things you need to do to achieve this.

## **Understand Your Customers**

This is a key question when determining the roadmap for your content marketing strategy. Where do your customers hang out in real life and online? What forums and websites do they visit? What challenges do they face and what kind of content can you create that will help them overcome these challenges?

Buyers are already overwhelmed by the amount of content that businesses generate (and you're not the only one distributing content – buyers are overwhelmed by the sheer amount of content coming from everybody who is marketing in the digital space). We need to shift our thinking as publishers and provide content that breaks through the vast amount of digital noise. The only way we can do this is by focusing on quality instead of quantity.

Marketing budgets are limited, which is why digital marketers need to focus on generating content that is well received and leads to conversions. Instead of embarking on a costly exercise of generating new content from the



get-go, many marketers can make great strides by taking a step back and conducting a content audit to determine the following:

**Find out what content already exists within your company.** There are undoubtedly presentations, proposals, brochures and action plans that can be adapted for content marketing purposes. A lot of great content will already be available within an organization and many times, all you need to do is remove sensitive client information and repurpose it for your target audience.

**Take a content inventory and identify gaps to fill.** When creating an inventory of content, you will probably find that there's a lot of information available on a number of products and services, but there are giant gaps when it comes to other products or services that a company offers. Identifying the gaps will give you a good starting point when it comes to determining what you need to write about.

**Replace or remove outdated content.** Few people visit their corporate website on a daily basis and they're usually horrified to see how outdated some of the information is. A content audit will show you where you need to remove and replace old legacy content.

**Improve the quality of existing content.** If you're working with content that's more than five years old, you might find that it contains good information but the tone, style and focus don't hit the mark. Improving on existing content is a good way to stretch your marketing budget. Instead of getting completely new content written, you can tweak the content that's already been created in order to make it more effective.

**Use content in new and different ways.** Case studies can be transformed into downloadable whitepapers, internal company news can be turned into blog posts, PowerPoint presentations can be repurposed into SlideShare presentations and photos from your conferences and functions can be used to populate your Pinterest account. Making your content strategy as far-reaching and effective as possible starts with being innovative about how you can take content and turn it into multimedia items, news items or any type of content that your target audience would want to consume.

**Find out who you can team up with to curate additional content.** If your primary business isn't to become a news agency for your industry, you can't spend all your time creating quality content. The smart way to share the latest, best and most relevant information with your fans and followers is to dedicate a portion of your content strategy to content curation. Content curation is sorting through a large amount of web content to find the best, most meaningful bits and presenting these in an organized, valuable way. It's a valuable part of any successful content marketing strategy.

## **What Your Content Marketing Mix Should Look Like**

According to the experts, a best-in-class marketing mix should consist of:

- 65% original content (created by your business)
- 25% curated content

- 10% syndicated content

A marketing mix of different sources of content will not only help you to leverage your resources more efficiently, but it will better engage your target audience because you're focusing on sharing high-value content with them.

## Types of Content

Now that you've seen how a marketing mix can consist of different types of content, it's important to understand how content is defined. Here's a quick overview of the top two types of content (original and curated):

*Original Content:* Original content is the content that you create yourself – it's the content that takes blood, sweat and tears (or at least dedicated time) to produce. Whether this means your staff members are actively writing blog posts, filming videos, repurposing brochures into long-format press releases or you are writing case studies of the projects you completed, they all fall under the umbrella term of original content.

*Curated Content:* While curated content refers to content that was produced by someone else, there is still a level of personalization involved because real people (you, your digital marketer or your staff) have gone through the process of selecting it to share with your audience. The key to getting content curation right is committing to consistently finding, organizing and sharing high quality and relevant digital content with the right target market.

In order to do this ethically, keep these tips in mind:

- Remember that you're sharing someone else's original content, so make sure you have credited the original source of the content.
- Make the content more personalized by adding your own point of view, writing style and opinions as you curate the piece.
- Make sure your own comments and input are longer than the piece that you are reposting.

To get the most traction out of your content marketing efforts, you have to ensure that your social media strategy is aligned with your goals. Share all your own (and curated content) on social media to make sure they reach your target audience, who can in turn share the content with their own networks. Write intriguing and attention-grabbing social updates and share the link on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+ or any other relevant platform.

## **Creating Your Content Team**

In order to produce the best content, you need to build your own content marketing team and this starts with hiring strong writers. Not only should they be able to write in plain, compelling language and produce content that flows and reads well, but they also need to understand what your audience wants to read. Besides your own team, you can also supplement your resources with a team of reliable freelancers who can help with creating content under your guidance.

Content marketing doesn't have to be limited to two or three people. Encourage participation from outside the

marketing team. The people within your company have probably been asked many questions about your products that have never been addressed to a wide audience. These questions will help you generate content ideas that need to be researched. Similarly, if customers are contacting you with questions, chances are there are hundreds of people online that are asking the same thing. You want your brand to be there at the forefront to answer them.

Look at the experts or experienced people in your organization who have a lot of valuable information to share and either ask them to contribute content or provide information so that your writers can rework this information into eBooks, case studies, and whitepapers.

Once you've got content ideas and people assigned to create this content (which can include managers, sales representatives, marketers and support staff), set targets so that everyone knows how many blog posts and social media updates – such as tweets and Facebook posts – need to be posted within a specific timeframe. Keep in mind that the backbone of successful content marketing is a consistent flow of new, interesting information.

## **The Importance of Establishing Buyer Personas**

Your website should be more about customers and less about your bottom line. If your customers can see that you are prioritizing them, they are more likely to trust you and your product. Encouraging customers to share information about your brand and products will build up your brand reputation and eventually reflect on your bottom line.

Use the content you produce to let your customers know that you understand their unique challenges and are focused on tailoring your information, products, and services in order to help make their lives easier.

## **What Are Buyer Personas?**

Buyer personas are fictional, generalized representations of your ideal customers. They help you understand your customers (and potential customers) better, and make it easier for you to tailor content to the specific needs, behaviors, and concerns of different groups.

The strongest buyer personas are based on market research as well as on insights you gather from your actual customer base (through surveys, interviews, etc.). Depending on your business, you could have as few as one or two personas, or as many as 10 or 20. If you're new to personas, start small! You can always develop more personas later if needed.

Here are some of the key questions you need to answer about your consumers when developing personas for your business:

1. What is their demographic information?
2. What is their job and level of seniority?
3. What does a day in their life look like?
4. What are their pain points?
5. What do you help them solve?
6. What do they value most? What are their goals?
7. Where do they go for information?

8. What experience are they looking for when seeking out your products or services?
9. What are their most common objections to your product or service?

You can download our full guide, *How to Create Buyer Personas* at this link: [www.wsiworld.com/buyer-personas](http://www.wsiworld.com/buyer-personas) to help you get started.

## How Can You Use Personas

At the most basic level, personas allow you to personalize or target your marketing for different segments of your audience. For example, instead of sending the same lead nurturing emails to everyone in your database, you can segment by buyer persona and tailor your messaging according to what you know about those different personas.

Let's say you have a paint supply company. Who do you want to buy your product? Do-it-yourselfers on a budget, small or large contractors, and artists, for example. What would their concerns be? What do they want from your product? The answer to these questions will give you topics that you can use to attract potential customers looking for a solution rather than a product. Potential content ideas could be "how to paint wooden furniture" or "what paint products are best for industrial buildings?"

## **The Details of Persona Development**

There are a number of other details to consider when you begin to develop your customer personas. Here are a few of those considerations:

### **SEO**

Using relevant keywords to create and optimize compelling content is an important part of an effective content strategy, but you first need to take a step back and determine what techniques will really align with your customers' needs. You need to create a search persona to better understand what your customers would be searching for online.

### **Industry Verticals**

When you start to research your buyer personas, you will also see how there are specific personas in each industry vertical (such as initiators, decision makers, buyers, and gate-keepers). In order to create content that appeals to them and helps them make a decision, you need to know the ins and outs of each industry vertical's decision-making process. The benefit is that you can feed each industry vertical with the type of information that engages them. Instead of using a single brand voice in all your content marketing, you can interact with the right people using the lingo they use, on the platforms they read and give them the content they want to consume with ease.



## Stages of the Buying Cycle

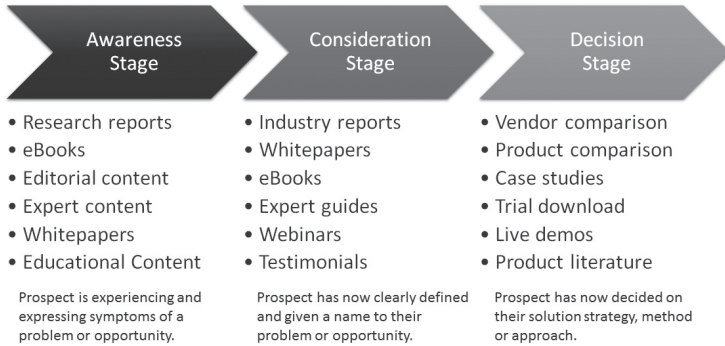
The marketing funnel is a model that shows the journey of how a potential customer becomes a client. Planning and creating a funnel helps you strategize exactly how you can create a streamlined process that will result in increased sales for your company.

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 are not yet aware that your company can provide it. The content you create - blogs, articles or curated content that you share on social media - needs to speak to the specific stages of the buyer's journey so that it is relevant and valuable. This helps with moving the reader down the funnel of awareness to a purchase decision.

*Awareness Stage:* In the first stage, potential buyers have a query about something they are looking to do but may not know how to go about addressing the issue or what product they require. Potential buyers will use a search engine to type in their query, finding you on Facebook, Twitter or through blog posts that address this query.

*Consideration Stage:* Their next step will be to do further research on your products or their query, requiring more in-depth information from eBooks, webinars, and industry reports in order to make an informed decision. Your case studies and customer testimonials will then provide the corroborating material to reassure potential customers that your product and service is the best choice to address their need.

*Decision Stage:* Lastly, detailed and technical product information and analyst reports will tell the potential client exactly how to use your product upon purchase.



*Figure 6: The Buyer's Journey and Content<sup>4</sup>*

By developing content that speaks to a consumer based on what part of the buyer's journey they are at, you can address and hold your potential client's attention from the very beginning, allowing them to navigate through content towards a purchase while empowering them at each individual stage with appropriate information.

Not only will buyer personas and industry verticals help you narrow down the types of content that you need to create, but it will also help you understand the triggers that cause people to search for information in your industry.

In many cases, a potential customer is triggered to start searching for solutions once they become aware of an existing or potential problem. If you're selling home insurance, for example, people could either start searching for what you've got to offer after they move into a new home, after they've been burgled, if they're investing in new household

items and electrics or if they're expecting a baby. Knowing that these are the triggers, you will be able to determine what questions each persona will need answered in order to achieve their goal. This is a vital aspect for developing an effective content strategy that will usher potential customers down the content funnel until they become a buyer.

By using persona information to create content that answers the searcher's question in a helpful way it will also build trust in your brand and help establish you as a thought leader in your industry.

## **The Value of a Content Calendar**

To make sure your potential customers are receiving relevant material at every level (and at frequent, regular intervals), you need to create a content calendar. This tool allows you to schedule and organize material for blogs and social networks well in advance. This way you can make sure that your Twitter and Facebook posts coincide with relevant blog posts, creating cohesion. A content calendar that includes all your posting platforms helps you ensure that potential customers can move through social media along a clearly defined path that addresses their specific need.

## **Marketing Your Content**

After you've written your content and you are ready to distribute it, you need to start planning how you are going to market it on each social media channel. Posting and distributing content online gives you the opportunity to create

more ways for your customers to find you, read about you and trust you. When you have a content marketing strategy that includes social media marketing, you can create a campaign-driven, highly strategic plan to track the cause and effect of your efforts through consumer engagement. Who's retweeting you? How many people are sharing your content and what does it take to make it go viral and grow your online community? This kind of measurement will show your success, challenges and help you shape future campaigns.

Different target audiences hang out on different social media sites, so you need to adapt your updates accordingly (even if you're not changing every individual blog post or article for each social media channel). Your LinkedIn audience, for example, might include more suppliers, colleagues and customers than your Facebook page, so make sure you craft a well thought-out update about the content that you are sharing. Pictures also do particularly well on Facebook, so make sure you've chosen an eye-catching image to accompany your post on this platform.

One of the easiest ways to make sure you're sharing your content on a regular basis across all your social media profiles is to use a social media management tool like Hootsuite. One of the benefits of using social media tools that allow you to schedule your posts is that you don't have to login to each social media profile and manually post an update. You can simply write your different updates and indicate which post should go where (and you can set the time in advance, so you could easily schedule a week or even a month's worth of social media updates all at once). Many of these online tools also offer reporting tools so that you can see how many people clicked on your links

or shared your content with their networks, which can be valuable when you need to identify what type of content is performing well on your social media channels.

## **The Importance of a Content Marketing Strategy**

A content marketing strategy is the blueprint to achieving your goals. At WSI, we have our content marketing strategy template that outlines everything from your company's content marketing goals to the various content themes that you will be focusing on each month. A few other things that your content marketing strategy should include are the commitments that were made from team members, factors that can contribute to the success of the strategy, the components of the strategy (such as webinars, webcasts, social media updates, whitepapers, blog posts, newsletters and videos) and the steps that need to be followed in order to successfully execute each phase of the strategy. It also includes a high-level calendar so that you can see which marketing tactics are planned for each month of the year.

The true power of your content marketing strategy occurs when your content is shared and syndicated across your customer's social channels as well. Once you've determined how you're going to go about creating and distributing content, you can use this strategy to encourage your audience to share your content and help build your brand's awareness.



# 5

## **SOCIAL MEDIA: SALES, MARKETING, & REPUTATION MANAGEMENT**

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*By Rob Thomas*

Many businesses deny it, but social media has positioned itself at the core of digital marketing. And it's not just core to marketing, but essential for lead generation and sales too. Think about the last time you booked a hotel or restaurant online – did you complete the reservation without checking for a 5-star rating or customer reviews?

While it might be difficult to keep up with the rapidly shifting social landscape, the businesses that find a way to make social work are reaping the benefits. Despite the plethora of available social platforms out there, if you've worked through persona development (consult our *How*

to *Create Buyer Personas* Guide at the following link: [www.wsiworld.com/buyer-personas](http://www.wsiworld.com/buyer-personas)), then determining which social channels to concentrate on should be easy. Remember to be successful the simple rule is, “fish where the fish are!”

While some may argue sales and marketing are two sides of the same coin, we’ve separated them out in this chapter because depending on your goals, you may decide to take a slightly different approach when it comes to how social media is used in your business. While there are some “naysayers” who don’t believe social media can ever be used to drive sales activity, we hope to give some practical examples as to why that is simply not the case.

## **Marketing with Social Media**

We’ve already touched on content marketing (see Chapter 4), and if you consider content to be the fuel of your digital marketing efforts, then social media is the engine that drives its success.

Here are a few fundamentals to help you leverage social media from a marketing perspective:

*Social Listening:* No matter which channel you use, before talking you should listen. If you’re swimming in the same pool as your target personas then you’re in the right place to better understand what’s important to them. Aside from using the same social channels, there are also more specific discussion groups or communities you should join to gain an even deeper understanding of the needs of your customers.



*Social Focus:* When the time is right to join in on the conversation, your focus should match your business objectives. For example, if brand awareness is your main objective then focus on the conversations that will help to build your visibility, rather than joining in randomly everywhere.

*Quality Before Quantity:* It's far better to have 100 dedicated followers than 1,000 people who followed you for a chance to win a free giveaway. If you connect with two to three quality prospects every day, then over a couple of years you'll have a great list of potential customers.

*Take Your Time:* If you want leads immediately, paid search marketing is a great option. But if you want to build a strong prospect pipeline that is resilient and delivers significant return on investment year after year, then social media marketing will need to be part of your mix. When used effectively in conjunction with good content marketing, success will come, but patience is required.

*Value vs. Viral:* Don't expect any of your content shared via social media to go viral. There is a lot of nonsense and hype surrounding the topic of viral marketing. What's more important is that you share good, quality content with an engaged audience. If you do this, you'll find that its reach will be multiplied many times over through likes, shares, +1s, and retweets. This in turn will help your natural search engine ranking too, bringing you yet another source of potential leads (read more about how your social reach can impact your SEO in Chapter 8 when we talk about WSI AdaptiveSEO™).

*Sharing on Steroids:* This idea takes a little more time and effort but can pay dividends. As well as sharing with your

quality followers, if you seek out key thought leaders or influencers relevant to your industry, sector, or even product or service, and connect with them, that's a start. You then need to develop a relationship. It is likely that over time, these thought leaders will share your content with their audience (which could be in the several thousand), thereby significantly extending your overall social reach.

*4/1/1:* In our social selling program we talk about being perceived as too pushy. If you post too many updates that promote your product or service, then you'll turn people off. As a rule of thumb, we recommend your social messages reflect a ratio of 4:1:1, which is broken down as follows:

- **4** posts that speak to your prospects' interests or challenges
- **1** social post that humanizes your brand
- **1** social post promoting your product or service

By humanizing your brand, we mean talking about something you or your staff has done; a charitable activity, for instance. As long as you add value, your audience will listen and share what you have to say.

*Join the Conversation:* I don't know how often I've seen a blog post get published and shared, only to receive comments from readers that are ignored. It's called social for a reason, right? I don't care how busy you are, if someone responds to a post you've made, thank them for reading and respond accordingly.

*Be Consistent:* Don't get overly enthusiastic and publish content three or four times a day, and then reduce it to once

or twice a week when you're busier. Consistency is the key. If you think you can only manage (as an individual or an organization) once a week, then so be it. But publish every week without fail! People will then know that your brand is a trustworthy and reliable source of information.

*Engagement vs. Broadcast:* Some marketing departments see social media as just another broadcast channel and treat them as such. Posts are distributed like press releases. All statement and no engagement. So you should not only promote conversation by asking readers a question or encouraging observations, but also take the time to engage in conversations started by others. Some call it reciprocity, but it's more than that. Through engaging in other relevant conversations (like blogs, discussion groups and on other people's posts) you demonstrate your brand's human values too.

## **Selling With Social Media**

If you use content and social media marketing correctly, over time, potential customers will find out what you do, why you do it and (as discussed in the next section) how well you do it. As a result, you'll start to receive inbound traffic or what is sometimes termed as inbound marketing.

However, regardless of whether you're business-to-consumer (B2C), business-to-business (B2B) or a non-profit organization, sitting back and waiting for the phone to ring is not an option. One of the great things about social media is that it can offer sales professionals an alternative "pool to fish in". After all, social media platforms are essentially

giant, perpetually running conferences; salespeople don't usually miss an opportunity to network at a conference. This idea of selling on social media is called social selling and is a great way for your sales team to expand their reach and lead generation activities.

So here are a few fundamentals to help you work out how to leverage social media to increase the quantity and quality of your sales.

### **Find the Best Way to Connect**

Your sales team should know the various personas that you have developed as an organization to better understand your target customers' wants, needs, challenges and, for instance, what social media channel they are likely to be active on. Each social media platform has its own set of rules of engagement that you need to understand and ultimately use to your advantage.

*Facebook:* Facebook, for instance, being one of the best arenas for B2C sales, is difficult to get much traction on without engaging with their advertising platform (discussed more in Chapter 6). However, because of its highly visual nature, once you have an "on profile" engaged audience on Facebook it's much easier to connect with your customers.

*LinkedIn:* LinkedIn, on the other hand, is predominantly focused on (but not exclusively so) B2B relationships and connections. They make it much easier and more productive for sales people to connect directly with prospective customers. There is however a specific science behind the concept of social selling that needs to be followed. These professional interactions need to be conducted in a way

that strikes a balance between giving people just the right amount of information and not coming off too pushy.

*Twitter:* Twitter, while a great broadcast tool should also be used as a research tool to help you listen to what's being said about you and your brand. Even if your connection with a consumer starts on another social site, they may follow you on Twitter to see what it is you really have to say about your products and services. So it's always a good idea to ensure you are actively managing and monitoring this type of social profile.

When it comes to focusing your efforts, I always recommend companies and sales professionals to first seek out their prospects on the channel they are most likely to frequent, and then offer alternative ways of connecting with you across your other social profiles. This way you can extend your connection with your prospects and customers across multiple social sites. After all, an email database goes stale, often at a rate of 30% per annum, as people change companies or Internet Providers, but people don't change Facebook or LinkedIn accounts. And as new social media sites come along, depending on your target market, it's essential to remember to fish where the fish are.

### **Build Your Own Presence and Persona**

People do business with people. That's always been the case and this hasn't changed even in today's digitized world. Regardless of whether you are a B2C or B2B company, your organization has a persona represented by your team members who communicate through social media. That's why it's important you present a persona

consistent with your brand values. For larger organizations that may have more people using social media on behalf of the brand it is especially important to have operating procedures and policies in place to both protect the brand integrity of the organization, as well as personal integrity of your team members.

In fact, some organizations are so scared of the reputation risk that comes with being on social media that they limit what the marketing or sales teams can do. So much so that from a sales perspective, the ability to do any type of social selling becomes non-existent.

The truth is there are risks that must not be ignored, but with a clear and transparent set of social media guidelines most organizations can build a comprehensive and effective social media presence and a persona that helps grow sales in many directions.

## **12-Step Program: How to Build a Social Selling Routine**

There is a danger that as social selling becomes part of your everyday activity it can, if not kept in check, take over your day. Rather, than being more effective, you might actually become less productive overall.

We've developed a 12-step program to help sales professionals focus on the social activities that are going to add value and ultimately increase their conversations and engagement levels with prospective customers.

**Here's a quick rundown of these 12 steps:**

- **Find content to share.** Both original and curated content. Use tools like Feedly and Pocket to help aggregate content quicker and easier.
- **Share content to relevant social networks.** Syndication tools like Hootsuite allows you to do this in a more streamlined approach.
- **Check who's viewed your profile.** Check them out to see if they match your potential customer persona.
- **Convert hot prospects into a connection.** That way when you post updates they will have the opportunity to see your outbound communications.
- **Check your content engagement.** And then convert these into connections too if they match your ideal persona.
- **Once a week build your online reputation.** Seek a recommendation, endorsement, or testimonial and give one too.
- **Review all LinkedIn email reminders and alerts.** Part of the social selling process is to set up saved advanced searches and alerts so that each week you get a list of hot leads dropped straight into your inbox (it's the gift that just keeps giving!).
- **Tag your prospects and set reminders.** Tagging is like segmenting. It ensures that your sales conversion activities can be far more personal and relevant, and reminders help you assign yourself tasks to move them down your sales funnel.

- **Overcome the dead zone with targeted content.** The dead zone is often the period between demonstration, proposal, and a purchase decision. Impatient sales people can become pests and anxiously chase leads. Sharing relevant content keeps you on their radar without being a nuisance.
- **Review other trigger alerts.** While each social media platform has their equivalent to saved searches, there are other tools like Google Alerts that you should use to supplement and achieve a 360-degree view.
- **Follow up on outstanding messages.** Whether you're using LinkedIn's own mini-CRM by leaving notes on your contact's profile (notes, reminders, where you met) or using your own CRM system, keep on top of this to make sure you help move potential customers down the sales funnel.
- **Kick-start five conversations every day.** If you've done steps one through eleven you're likely already having five conversations or more a day. But if not, take action to make it happen and you *will* hit your sales goals.

## **Social Media and Reputation Management**

There's nothing worse than having your sales and marketing teams spend all this time and effort on building your sales pipeline and brand awareness using social media only for it all to be hindered by a poor online reputation.



Most social media platforms encourage some form of reputation management. There's the soft side, based on social signals such as likes, shares, retweets and endorsements (which say something about how good your content sharing is). Then there's more robust evidence in the form of recommendations on LinkedIn or 5-star ratings across a range of social sites, including Google+.

So don't wait until you have a problem (like a bad customer review) to repair your reputation. Build a strong digital reputation now. It's not difficult, it just requires you to plan a process to consistently seek out feedback and then use the right tools to make that reputation visible to the world.

And social media helps you do that. We all know that the best form of marketing is to have an army of raving fans shouting about you.

There are really only two main reasons that you might not have a good reputation online:

1. **You're not that good!** In which case you should improve your products or services before engaging in social media. Period.
2. **You haven't asked your customers for feedback.** So ask them and begin the process of gathering positive testimonials!

A positive online reputation will not only have a big impact on your inbound opportunities, but also on the conversion rate of prospects who are doing their research about you online before they purchase from you.

Remember, your reputation doesn't have to be bad to lose the digital marketing game. If your competitor's

reputation is better or you have no visibility at all, then you're out of the game before you even knew you were in it.

**So here's some quick tips to get you started:**

- Implement a process to ask for feedback and make sure your customers know about it.
- When you get good feedback from a customer, spread it across multiple social channels. For example, take recommendations gathered from LinkedIn and use software to inject them into your website, blog, and Facebook pages so that they have maximum exposure across your digital properties and profiles.
- Turn your best customer feedback into case studies with attributed testimonials and showcase these on your website.
- Don't forget to thank those who leave great reviews. In fact, respond to all who take the time to give their feedback. Repeat businesses and referrals are a huge boom to your business.

If online reputation management is an area of your digital marketing strategy you haven't worked on yet, put down this book and do a search on Google to see what people are saying about your brand online. Using a search phrase like "*brand name* reviews" will give you a quick glimpse into what your customers are finding when they do the same sort of search as well. What you see will determine whether you have some cleaning up to do or if you can just concentrate on the tips we have listed above.

## Social Media for Service

While most of the focus of this book is around driving up your bottom line through sales and marketing, don't forget that you can also improve your bottom line by reducing costs as well. In fact, one of the elements organizations are now adding into their digital marketing strategy are ways in which they can use social media to reduce operating expenses.

How you go about using social media in this manner will vary from business to business, but here's a couple of scenarios that will help get your cost reduction ideas flowing.

### Scenario #1

A veterinary practice spends a fortune sending out postcards (printing, compiling, and postage) to remind registered owners that their pets' vaccinations are due. An option to reduce these costs is to collect pet owners' social media preferences and permission to alert them via direct messaging. Since not all pet owners will be active on social media, an email address or phone number serves the same function so email or text messaging could be used instead.

### Scenario #2

A bus company suffers a terrible winter financially. Partly due to cancelations caused by roads conditions but mostly due to a reputation for poorly communicating those cancelations to their customers. With only a few staff and a couple phone lines, they just couldn't get the word out quickly enough. To fix their communication problem, the bus company could gather people's social media information

and set up their own social feeds to send out alerts to passengers. This would allow them to not only communicate real-time updates and alternative routes, but also allow their passengers to alert the company to localized weather conditions and road blockages as well.

We recommend that you take some time to consider the ways in which social media could make you more efficient and not only help you maintain a great reputation with your customers but also help you reduce costs at the same time.

## **Tools That Save Time and Measure Success**

There are many tools out there to help you be successful in reaching your business goals through the use of social media. Here are just a few to get you started:

*Discover.ly*: This is a Chrome extension to help you see the social media accounts of people in your existing email database so you can connect with them in a variety of ways. Rapportive is another similar option.

*Pocket*: Helps you quickly save any content you come across online, which you can then drop into folders you've created for later use. It's a content curator's dream as you can tag and filter content by image, video or article.

*Feedly*: Another tool to aggregate content from trusted sources. In addition to connecting sources directly into your Feedly account, if you have created Twitter lists (which is another brilliant way of pulling articles from subject matter experts or thought leader into one place) then simply

add your list to Feedly to create your own topic-specific daily eNewspaper.

*Hootsuite:* Speaking of Twitter lists, if you are looking to maximize your benefits from your content marketing efforts and minimize the time you spend syndicating it across all your online properties (site or social), then adding your Twitter lists to your streams of information on Hootsuite is a must. Hootsuite is also a social media management system that can help you organize your social postings across multiple channels through one interface

## **Bringing It All Together**

Whether social media will help you achieve your business goals is something that you need to consider as part of your overall digital marketing strategy. But in today's online world, it should be a vital component of everyone's digital marketing mix.

Through continuing to educate and sharing useful content that speaks to your customers' interests or challenges, as well as providing superior service, the ultimate goal is to turn people who started off as strangers into your loyal brand advocates. All of which can be achieved when you have a solid social media strategy in place.



# 6

## DIGITAL ADVERTISING: EXPAND YOUR REACH

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*By Benjamin Smith*

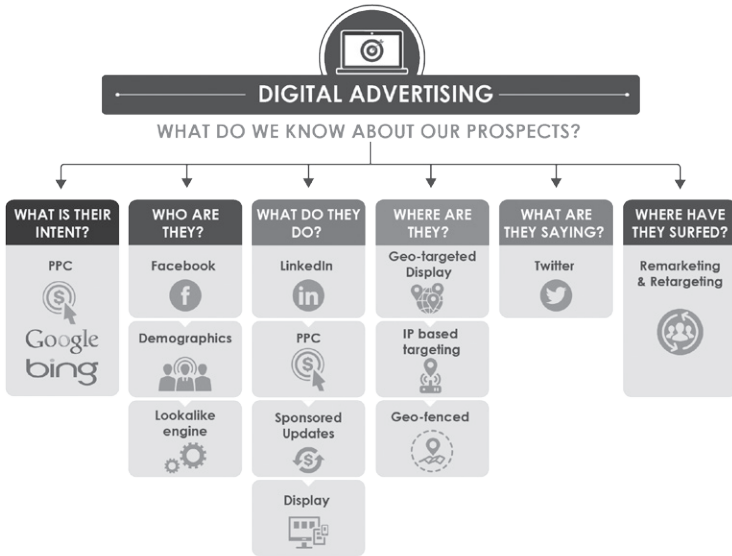
It used to be that when we talked about advertising online that we were just talking about pay per click (PPC) ads on Google. Today, there is a wide variety of digital advertising platforms and strategies out there that businesses can tap into.

It's no coincidence that all of the major social media sites (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and YouTube) have built an advertising component into their product offering. Since they collect demographic and geographic information on their users and they monopolize where people are spending their time online, it makes sense that they'd also

provide advertisers a way to put their marketing messages in front of them.

And even in the couple years since we published the first edition of this book (back in 2013) other digital advertising channels, like display and remarketing, which were being widely used at the time, are being used even more as businesses look to reach their customers in any way that they can.

The trick then becomes knowing which digital advertising tactics you should use when. In Figure 7, you can see that by simply understanding what it is you know about your prospects, you can help determine which advertising channels you should be focusing your efforts on.



*Figure 7: Digital Advertising:  
What Do We Know About Our Prospects*



So in this chapter we're going to take a look at the various digital advertising tactics that are available to you so you are well educated on how to use them effectively when it comes time to putting your digital advertising strategy together.

## **Paid Search Advertising**

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 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, the 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. Ads 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 your 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**

I'm sure 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 best practices can be a bit of a tedious task to complete. That's where bid optimization software comes into play. These types of tools monitor bids and activity and adjust individual keyword bids to remain competitive or fit within your budget.

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 a \$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 web 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 top organic ranking, then supplement with PPC advertising to dominate search engine listings for 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 organized 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 doorman, 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'll 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 a 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's 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.

## **Enhanced Campaigns**

Enhanced Campaigns are designed to help make PPC campaigns more efficient by expanding them across the many platforms people use to search (desktops, smartphones, and tablets). Before, AdWords revolved around searcher

intent; with Enhanced Campaigns, your ads capture intent and context.

If you're a business that depends on local customers, the big question is: are you taking mobile search seriously enough?

Mobile search simply refers to a search done on a mobile device. A large portion of local, mobile searchers end up walking through the door of whatever they find, and a big chunk of that foot traffic ends up buying something.

If you are a local business that relies on people visiting you in order to make a sale, then you are among the group of advertisers that can benefit the most from the increasing use of mobile search.

A feature of Google Enhanced campaigns is the capability to increase your keyword bids when someone is searching within a close radius of your business location. For example, let's say you are a Mexican restaurant looking for patrons during your slow hours/days. You know there are several searches done for Mexican restaurants in your area, so you set up a mobile ad and adjust the bid to be higher for nearby searches.

When someone searches for Mexican food within a few miles of you, your ad is shown prominently at the top of the list. Your ad is clicked and you immediately show a 10% off coupon for lunch.

Even better, your ad in Google shows your address so customers can easily get directions. Your phone number is shown in the ad as well, so hungry people can call you directly for a reservation without even clicking through to your site.



## Ad Extensions

Ad extensions are additional components of PPC ads that can improve the effectiveness of your ad and give users more reasons to click.

Examples of ad extensions are:

- *Call Extension:* Your company's phone number listed with your ad
- *Sitelinks:* Links to internal pages of your site
- *Review Extensions:* Third party endorsements or awards

Ad extensions don't have any additional cost, but will still incur the same cost per click as a click on the ad's headline. One of the best reasons to use ad extensions, and as many extensions as you can, is that it can help improve your ad's position. Everything else being equal, an ad with extensions enabled will typically be rewarded with better positioning.

### Sears.com - Sears Tools

**Ad** [www.sears.com/Tools](http://www.sears.com/Tools) ▾

Find Great Prices On Sears Tools Today at Sears. Shop Now and Save!

Ratings: Prices 8.5/10 - Website 8.5/10

Sears has 18,546 followers on Google+

📍 5200 S 76th St, Greendale, WI - (800) 697-3277

#### Craftsman Tool Sale

Craftsman Tools Over \$50 on Sale.  
Save Up to 25% on Select Tools.

#### Weekly Deals on Tools

Find Big Savings on Sears® Tools.  
Up to 50% Off Select Items!

#### Shop Craftsman Tools

Find Incredible Value on Select  
Craftsman Tools at Sears. Buy Now!

#### Hot Deals on DeWalt Tools

Sale on Select Power and Hand Tools  
from DeWalt. Buy Now to Save!

Figure 8: Example PPC Ad with Many Ad Extensions Activated

## **Gain Knowledge and Insight**

While your PPC campaign is providing increased revenue for your business, you can also learn about how to run your business more efficiently. How would you like to gain insight into your popular products and services or customer demographics?

### **Popular Products and Services**

One of the most overlooked benefits of running a PPC campaign is knowledge gain. PPC advertising also functions as market research by giving you insights on the most popular search terms people are using to arrive at your site.

Digital retailers, for example, should expand their keyword list and experiment with a vast cross section of their products. Some products that haven't sold well in the past might turn out to be very popular with enough search volume.

Insurance companies that traditionally specialize in car insurance might want to test ads about boat insurance or travel insurance. If testing of those niches results in a favorable amount of searches and website traffic, those insurance companies might consider expanding their expertise and offering those types of insurances. Google provides a keyword research tool to help businesses with this kind of experimentation.

### **Customer Demographics**

PPC also offers customer demographic insights that wouldn't otherwise be available offline.

Relevant information, especially for national campaigns, is when geographic locations generate the most customers. If you're a retailer with online sales in addition to brick and mortar stores, you can use PPC to help determine what areas of the country are ripe for new store locations.

PPC also helps you find out what time of day customers are looking for the services you provide. For instance, a cruise travel agency might find that most of its PPC traffic is converting on Monday and Friday nights between 6:30-8:30 pm. They can increase their bids on popular search terms only during those hours, and schedule more customer service agents to handle the higher volume of phone calls.

### **Phone Call Tracking and Recording**

A major side benefit of tracking phone calls for PPC optimization is that you can listen to the recordings. Reviewing calls is a great way to learn about your customers and their needs through the conversations they have with your staff or agents.

Not only can this help you learn more about the products and services your callers are looking for, but customer service improvements can be made as well. The phone recordings can be used for coaching of staff and receptionists to improve the conversion rate of valuable phone leads.

### **Shopping Campaigns**

If you sell products online, product-listing ads (PLAs) are a way to place your products in front of relevant searches for the products you offer. PLAs are shown in Google when

someone searches for a particular item, similar to a standard PPC ad. However, PLAs will show an image of your product along with other details like price.

Product listing ads are created in your Google Merchant Center account, which is linked to your Google AdWords account. Once this is accomplished, the process is mostly automated. You can then bid differently for groups or products, depending on which products are more important than others. Special offers can also be emphasized.

PLAs bring the searcher directly to your site to make a purchase, and you only pay when someone clicks on the ad.

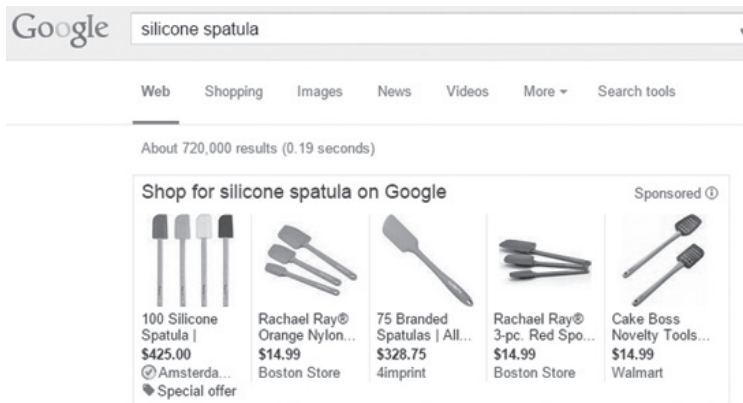


Figure 9: Example of Google PLAs

## Expand Your Ad Ecosystem

Google is the single biggest player in the digital advertising world. Through partnerships, Google can also give you

access to advertising on sites like AOL, YouTube, Google Maps and hundreds of others.

However, Google is not the only option. Don't forget about Bing and Yahoo (both available through the Microsoft Advertising platform). Although Bing and Yahoo have a lower share of the search market, cost can be lower and conversion rates are sometimes better.

If you're selling products or services that are a good fit for the buyer audience on Amazon.com, you can also advertise there without necessarily listing your product for sale there. Amazon has a standalone advertising platform that can be accessed directly through Amazon.com.

All it takes is a little testing to determine where the most economical conversions are coming from. Don't forget to tag your PPC traffic sources and monitor results in your website's analytics.

## **Display Advertising**

Display advertising is the counterpart to PPC and can simplistically be described as the banner ads that you see all over the Internet. Display ads are typically used to build brand awareness or supplement other digital campaigns like PPC. Display ads can drive direct conversions, but usually not as well as PPC or PLAs. Display ads are most commonly used to build brand awareness at the top of the sales funnel.

When running display ad campaigns, look for a direct publisher. When you don't use a direct publisher, you probably will pay additional third-party fees. Also, look for a system that provides you with access to a large footprint of

display networks rather than just a subset. This will provide you with more reach and better ability to optimize results.

It’s important that you use a display advertising system that provides transparent reporting. Without knowing frequency and recency data with your campaign, it’s difficult to track performance and control your brand’s reputation. There’s nothing worse than annoying your audience with too many ad impressions without even knowing it!



Figure 10: All Major Ad Exchanges

## Optimizing Display Advertising

One of the best ways to optimize your display campaign is to blacklist. If a particular website has a low number of clicks or costs too much, then that can significantly throw off your campaign averages. Blacklisting sites like this is appropriate to improve overall performance.

The other option is to whitelist certain sites. When a website has a low cost per click or a high click through

rate, it's beneficial to implement bid multipliers on these higher performing properties.

Also take a look at your display advertising categories and check overall CTR and CPC for different verticals. Increase bids for the higher performing categories and decrease (or pause) bids for the lower performers.

In addition, don't forget to check device performance. If mobile devices are performing poorly in comparison, you may want to consider creating mobile specific ad creatives and mobile-friendly landing pages. Alternatively, mobile app advertising may be something to consider instead.

## **Demand Side Platforms**

DSP simply stands for demand side platform. It's a system that allows media buyers to purchase display space that publishers place in the system. It's usually accompanied with RTB (real-time-bidding) so that advertisers can bid for ad space without the need to negotiate directly with each individual publisher or website entity. The end result is an auction that works similar to a PPC auction.

DSPs typically aggregate many ad exchanges together in one platform and provide tools to help manage and optimize your campaigns. They are an all-in-one solution to manage your display advertising. Look for a platform that has direct relationships with the ad exchanges and provides robust, transparent reporting.

## **Programmatic Display**

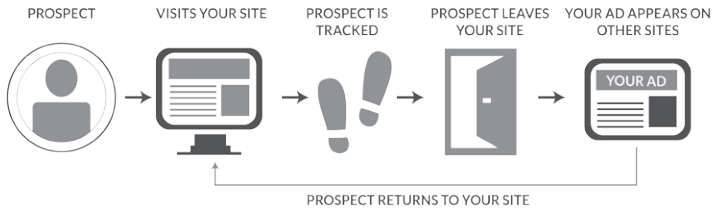
Programmatic display is the concept of bid management, monitoring results and optimizing display performance in real-time. Although currently applied to display ads, the real marketing shift will occur when we can apply this to TV ads, radio ads and billboards.

Programmatic is making a big impact on attribution. Since the concept involves managing and optimizing all of your display channels in one place, it makes it easy to clearly identify which channels or properties are driving the most success. If we can accurately attribute views or conversions, we can appropriately shift media spend. Much of this process can be automated for efficiency.

## **Remarketing**

Remarketing is a display strategy that puts your ads in front of people who have already visited your website. I'm sure you've seen these types of ads, like when you look at a car website and the next thing you know you're looking at an ad for that car on your local news website. Or perhaps you've looked for an airline ticket and that airline is following you around with a special deal. That's how remarketing works – it's a way for you to get your customers back to your website and re-engage. The increased ROI from a remarketing campaign can be as high as a 15-20% lift, based on experience with our clients.





*Figure 11: How Remarketing Works*

When running a remarketing campaign, be sure to leverage a platform that can accommodate all remarketing methodologies.

*Site Wide Remarketing:* Retarget users while they are anywhere on the Internet.

*Shopping Cart Abandoner Remarketing:* Specifically retargeting users who didn't fully complete the conversion funnel.

*Facebook Remarketing:* Connecting with your valued customers while on their Facebook page.

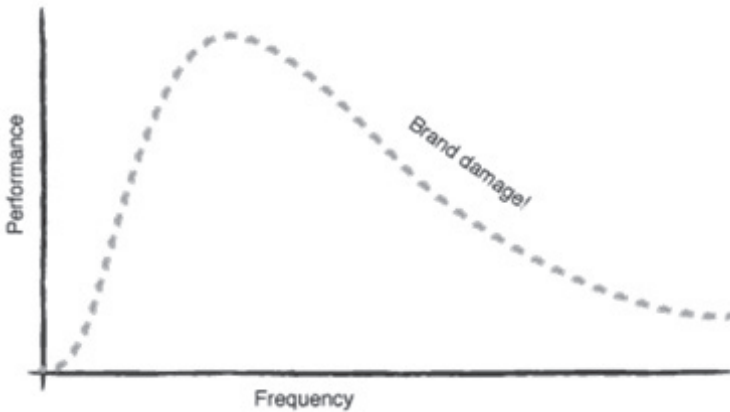
## Optimizing Remarketing

Improving results for your remarketing campaign doesn't have to be complicated. Just follow these fundamentals:

- Remarketing ads are all about the image. Use a professional designer or even include the specific product your customer was looking for if you can.

- Don't use boring ad copy. Be descriptive and include a compelling reason for people to reconsider your product or service.
- Include a special offer or coupon as an incentive for people to click back to your site.
- Run more than one creative concept or special offer and see which one works better.

Also be sure to consider how recently you're displaying your remarketing ad (the sooner, the better) and how frequently the ad is displayed (maintain a balance – not too often to be annoying).



*Figure 12: Graph Demonstrating Remarketing Performance in Relation to Ad Frequency*

## Social and Video Marketing

There are so many social marketing opportunities these days that it can be confusing. Some social networks can be a better fit for certain advertisers than others. Here is an introduction to a few of the most popular:

*Facebook:* Facebook is the biggest opportunity for advertising in the social space. Not only can you remarket on Facebook, but tightly targeted ads can be placed to reach specific audiences. Unlike PPC, Facebook does not utilize keyword bids. Instead, the platform allows the advertiser to reach specific users based on demographic data and user interests. Facebook has the ability to optimize your performance for you using conversion data.

*LinkedIn:* LinkedIn is best suited for business-to-business advertising or for job opportunities. With a user base of mostly business professionals, this platform is ideal for advertising professional services. Targeting on LinkedIn includes demographic data as well as job function.

*Twitter:* Twitter advertising can benefit companies already active on Twitter the most. Some of the unique advantages of advertising on this platform is the ability to promote your account to attract more followers, target by keyword, and target people interacting with TV content on Twitter. This is a good way to engage with a TV audience that might be a good fit for your product or service.

*YouTube:* YouTube is the most popular digital video channel and is owned by Google. Of course, companies have the ability to advertise on YouTube through an AdWords account.

Here are some advantages of video advertising on YouTube:

- People like watching videos and video content can help move your audience closer to your brand.
- It allows you to talk about your business in a way that isn't possible with just text or images.
- You're only charged when people watch the video. If people aren't interested, you don't pay.
- You have many targeting options such as age, gender, location and interests.
- It works across different devices.

A big mistake many companies make is recycling TV advertisements online. Come up with a creative video concept that engages your audience more than trying to sell something. YouTube ads typically work best when they are short, engaging and include a digital call-to-action. Digital video ads allow for viewers to click on the ad, so be sure to take advantage of that opportunity.

YouTube includes built-in analytics for you to track your video ad's performance. Viewing analytics gives you insights into which of your ads perform best, resulting in adjustments to your campaigns for improved success.

### **TrueView, In-Stream Ads**

In-stream ads are one form of YouTube advertising that let you run a video ad at the front end of YouTube videos and associated networks. You might also know them as preroll ads. Viewers can skip the ad after 5 seconds or choose to watch the ad in full. You're only charged if the

video ad plays in its entirety or after 30 seconds, whichever comes first.

YouTube in-stream ads should be used mostly to drive awareness and partly to increase website traffic. To make in-stream ads most successful, make your viewers intrigued and be sure to include a call-to-action overlay that provides viewers with a reason to click-through to your site.

### **TrueView, In-Display Ads**

In-display ads are essentially another version of YouTube video ads that allow you to place ads next to other YouTube videos or content on the Google Display Network. The advantage with in-display ads is that you only pay when someone clicks on your video ad to watch it.

In-display ads can be a better fit for lead generation and direct response campaigns. You can also use in-display ads to drive viewers to your branded YouTube channel. Your branded YouTube channel can then send traffic to your website as a secondary step. It's a great way to couple brand building with lead generation.

## **Measurable Results Equals Increased Conversion**

As soon as a digital advertising campaign is launched, businesses can begin collecting data. Not only can you simply track the number of impressions and visits, but you can also track conversions in several different ways. A conversion is defined by the advertiser, for example a sale, a subscription, a contact, a download or whatever goal the

advertiser is trying to achieve with the ad. Smart marketers will then use that data to make improvements to their digital advertising campaigns.

### **Track Individual Ads and Test New Ones**

Within the reporting system for your website, Google dashboard and social media sites, it's very easy to check the performance of ads and how well they convert search traffic into customers. The most important metrics to monitor are an ad's CTR and conversion rate – the higher the better.

It's not always easy to predict what ad text is going to drive the most new customers, so the best practice is to continually experiment with new ads. You can even run multiple ads at the same time and see which one works better. This practice is called A/B testing. Frankly, if you're not testing, you're likely leaving money on the table.

Sometimes just one or two words make a difference, so always test variations of ad titles, special offers, and calls-to-action. Tell people exactly what they'll get if they click on your ad and give them a reason to click on yours and not your competitor's. In general, the ad should contain keyword related product or service, an offer or benefit, and a call-to-action. While ad text space is limited, experienced copywriters can optimize results utilizing A/B testing.

### **Track Keyword Performance**

After you have setup your keywords, monitor the available keyword reports to determine which ones are driving converting traffic. Get rid of the keywords that don't produce results and focus your efforts more on the keywords that are working.

Also, keep an eye open for new keyword opportunities that are revealed in the search logs in your PPC account. You'll find additional, more specific keywords people are actually using to find your ad instead of the broader terms on your keyword list. Add those more granular search terms to your list to see your CTR go up and costs go down.

Not only should you add new keywords, but also add negative keywords. Your negative keyword list should contain words that you do not want to trigger your ad. For example, a sporting goods retailer may bid on a term such as 'dome tent'. There could be people searching for a 'wedding tent' who are obviously not relevant to your business, so be sure to add 'wedding' to your negative keyword list.

When measuring keyword effectiveness, again, CTR and conversion rate are two of the most important factors. However, conversion rate measuring takes a couple of extra steps.

## **Conversion Tracking**

What is important to you when someone actually goes ahead and visits your website through a digital ad? What exactly are you trying to accomplish? Are you trying to get someone to fill out a form, request an appointment or join your mailing list? Do you have a brochure or whitepaper you'd like people to download? Maybe you want someone to pick up the phone and call you.

These are all forms of website conversions that should be tracked individually. You can't fix what you don't measure.

It's normally not difficult to implement, but website conversion tracking usually requires your web developer

to insert some snippets of code on various pages of your website to provide feedback to the advertising platform. However, once this code is in place, you'll be able to track the number of web forms that are filled out from PPC traffic, sales, profit, and how many coupons were downloaded.

Advertising management platforms are sophisticated enough to trace these conversions back to specific ads and keywords. You'll have all of the data you need to determine what keywords and ads in your campaign are resulting in conversions and which ones are not.

### **Phone Call Tracking**

Not only can businesses track conversions of different events that happen on their website pages, they can also track phone calls resulting from their digital advertising activities. One of the ways that Google allows you to track phone calls is by providing "click-to-call" tracking numbers that you can use in your ads. When someone places a call using those numbers, the call can be tracked as a conversion from your ad. You'll know right away how effective your ads are at driving phone calls and can make improvements on your digital advertising strategy to increase call volume.

Just as you can track your calls directly from your ad, you can also track and record phone calls once customers land on your site or landing page. With third-party phone call tracking tools, calls that come from a customer that arrived at your site through digital advertising can be tracked separately from the each of the campaigns you are running as well as from your normal phone calls. These calls can be attributed to specific keywords in your



ad campaigns as well and be used in the optimization of your campaign.

## **Use the Digital Tools at Your Disposal**

Digital advertising should be part of your digital marketing strategy no matter what else is being done. So ultimately, what do you need to know about digital advertising?

The nuts and bolts of it include:

- Knowledge is power. Learn digital advertising strategies and system administration. Become Google AdWords certified or find a consultant who is.
- Do keyword and audience targeting research, and spend a lot of time on it. Most of the time the initial research is half of the work.
- Consider using an ad platform that semi-automates multiple publisher bid and ad management.
- Learn digital ad content best practices, create multiple ads for keywords, and do periodic A/B testing to determine ad effectiveness.
- Learn how to use analytics to drive continuous improvement.
- Learn how to create effective landing pages (content, layout, colors, images, offers, calls-to-action, etc.) and do periodic A/B testing of landing pages to optimize conversion effectiveness.
- Landing pages must be highly relevant to the ad's message or the ad's performance will suffer.

Different forms of digital advertising come into play at different points in the sales funnel. Display and video advertising help with brand awareness for a customer at the top of the funnel, while PPC can be leveraged at the bottom of the funnel to directly turn these customers into leads and sales. A sound digital marketing campaign will include a fair mix of everything.

# 7

## **LANDING PAGE OPTIMIZATION: IT'S ABOUT PSYCHOLOGY, NOT TECHNOLOGY**

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*By Chuck Bankoff*

“Advertising is the art of getting people to buy things they don’t need with money they don’t have.” This statement predates the Internet by decades, yet still rings true today. While it might be a bit cynical, let’s not forget that in the digital world people rarely stumble across a website without actively searching for something. If you have what people are looking for, it’s your job to help them find it.

The problem is most websites and landing pages are so ill-conceived and poorly constructed that they’re little more than monuments to their owners.

Let's make something transparently clear: people do not read on the Internet, they scan. They see headlines, images, and bullet points. Depending on the personality type of your visitor, you have between two and eight seconds to convince them to stay on your website. Searchers click in, take a quick peek, and click out. Those are the conditions in which business is conducted on the Internet.

And when it comes to the landing pages you're using to drive conversions for your online campaigns, you have to be even more strategic with how the page is laid out and reads to a visitor. So let's take a look at the elements that make for good landing page optimization.

## Write Good Headlines

Since we all have a tendency to scan before we read, one of the few things that are guaranteed to be seen and actually read is the headline. A successful landing page is a combination of many elements, but if your headline fails, your entire landing page will fail. You need to spend more time on your headline than on any other element of your landing page.

*“You have to crap out 25 headlines  
for every piece of content.”  
—David Ogilvy*

Your headline should be either clever, shocking or interesting. It should be focused, relevant and address your target audience's pain. The truth is any headline you come

up with is some variation of one that has been used successfully multiple times over. Think of it as a formula:

- **The Secret:** The 5 Secrets of [*Retail Success*]
- **Be Done:** Be Done with [*Procrastination*] Once and For All
- **Need to Know:** What You Need to Know About [*Training Your Cat*]
- **Play on Words:** Urine Good Hands with PowerPlus! (about a generator that runs on urine)
- **You Can Have It All:** Now You Can Have [*Financial Freedom...And Keep Your Job*]
- **The Hush-Hush:** 5 Little Known Ways to Dominate [*Your Office Cubicle*]

You get the idea; there are scores of formula-driven examples out there. If you're having trouble coming up with something completely original, take a look at some of the headlines that got your attention, and play around with substituting your offer.

### **Headline Best Practices**

*Keep Your Headline to One or Two Lines:* Remember, people aren't reading your headline, they're scanning it. It isn't body copy, it's an attention grabber at a glance.

*Center Your Headline:* This gives it the special emphasis it deserves. It stands out as important. DO NOT ever center body copy.

*Make Them Big:* No BIGGER! Your Headline should be disproportionately larger than any other text on the page, not just the next font size up.

*Make Them Bold?* Maybe, maybe not. Depends on the overall size differential between the headline and the body copy and the font selection.

*Use a Different Font:* Reserve separate fonts for the headline and the body copy. You might try mixing serif and sans serif fonts.

*Use Title Case:* Make the first letter of each word capitalized. You can keep spacer words like “to” and “the” lower case to put more emphasis on the important words.

*Quotation Marks:* In some cases you might consider putting quotation marks around your headline to further make it stand out.

*Use a Sub-Headline:* Make it the same size as the body copy (or much smaller than the primary headline) and perhaps make it bold.

Ready to start scribbling down some headlines? Not just yet... Exactly who are you writing that headline for? Certainly not for yourself. You're writing it to appeal to your next best customer, and that customer should be a very specific person.

## How Your Buyer Personas Play into Your Landing Page Strategy

We've already talked about the importance of establishing your buyer personas in our Content Marketing chapter (Chapter 4). But your buyer personas come into play at every point of your digital marketing strategy, which means they are a critical component to the success of your landing pages as well.

If you're like most business owners, marketing managers or sales reps, you probably have your ideal customer pegged...at least in your head. But ask yourself this: is the image of your ideal customer an amalgamation of all your buyers rolled into one? If so, you are doing yourself a disservice and probably losing out on a lot of leads.

Sure, I bet your product or service is perfect for all sorts of consumers, but how do they know that? Unless you're able to appeal to them on their own terms, it's likely your message will go unnoticed.

How can you create a landing page that converts visitors into leads unless you know who you are trying to convert? To appeal to your customer, you need to first know their goals and challenges and address those specifically with your landing page copy and your offer.

Identifying your personas means identifying who you want to reach. And where they hang out online. Once you know that, you can fine-tune your landing page(s) for your ideal customer(s). You may have more than one buyer persona, so you will want to prioritize. That might mean having different landing pages for each persona.

Here is an actual example of a buyer persona from one of our clients. As you read through "Suzie Shopkeeper"

pay close attention to finer details of the persona. It doesn't have to be perfect, but the more detailed and specific your buyer personas are, the easier it will be to create highly targeted marketing (and landing pages) that will appeal to them.



Buyer Persona for:  
Suzie Shopkeeper

*Figure 13: Buyer Persona Example*

*Gender:* Female

*Age:* Early to mid-40s

*Income:* \$4,000 - \$5,000 per month

*Education:* College degree

*Location:* Mid-USA

*Roles:* Business owner, wife and mother to three adolescent children.

*Goals:* Being a successful business owner and entrepreneur. She wants to find ways to help her become more efficient so she can spend more time with her family.

*Challenges:* She owns and runs her own business. When she started her business she had to dedicate a lot of time



to getting it off the ground but now she wants to strike a better work/life balance so she can enjoy watching her kids grow up. She's tentative to take a step back or change her standard business routine as she wants to still increase her overall sales.

*Suzie's Story:* After completing college she entered the workforce like everyone else and started a career in a typical nine-to-five job. Feeling like she had hit a plateau early on in her corporate job, she decided to take a risk and start up her own business and follow her passion for being an entrepreneur.

Driven by success, Suzie dove head first into getting her business off the ground. As her business developed, so did her family, as she started to have children. Suzie enjoys being her own boss and doing something that she loves but is still working the long hours she did at the start to keep the business growing. While that was fine when she was younger, now that she has a family she doesn't want to miss out on watching her kids grow up.

Suzie likes to maintain control in her life and is afraid that if she takes a step back in the business or changes how she does things (so she can spend more time with her family) that it may negatively impact the growth of her business. She needs to find a way to find a balance between work and life, without feeling like she is losing control. While she has decent computer skills, she has just enough to get by and knows that there is much more she could be doing to help streamline her business overall, she's just not sure where to start.

Again, be sure to consult Chapter 4 for more information on developing your buyer personas or you can

download our guide, *How to Create Buyer Personas* at this link: [www.wsiworld.com/buyer-personas](http://www.wsiworld.com/buyer-personas).

## **Landing Page Campaigns**

Sometimes a well thought-out marketing campaign requires multiple landing pages to move a buyer down the sales funnel. These campaigns typically start with a top of the funnel offer for people who aren't customers yet. They are in the awareness stage and can be nurtured through a marketing automation step-by-step process until they eventually become customers.

### **Example: Suzie Shopkeeper**

We know from our buyer persona example that Suzie Shopkeeper owns her own business and is looking for an edge to make her more successful and free up some time. For demonstrations sake, say we are a business that sells point-of-sale (POS) software. We can help Suzie. She just doesn't know it yet.

### **The Primary Offer**

On our landing page, we offer Suzie a free eBook called "Five Principles to Streamlining Your Business Operations." Since we wrote the eBook, naturally our services are baked into each of the 5 Principles and subtly branded throughout. On our landing page, there is no navigation to other pages or any other distractions. The landing

page is focused entirely on one low-risk offer that would be of interest to the Suzie Shopkeeper persona.

Suzie fills out the form (a very basic unintimidating form) and immediately three things happen:

- Suzie gets the link to download the eBook in her inbox.
- Suzie goes directly to the thank you page (the secondary offer)
- Suzie is now in our database

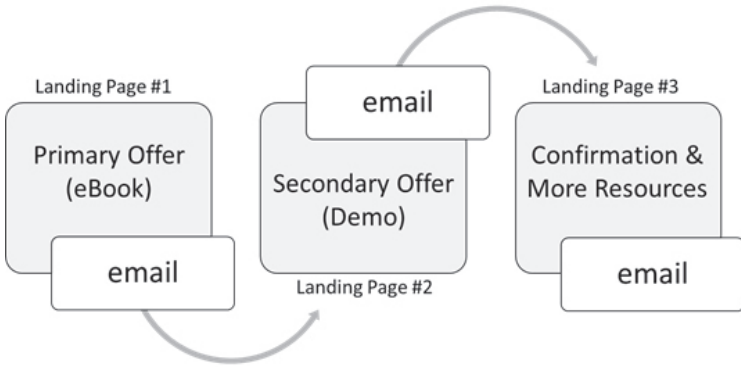
### **The Secondary Offer**

The email not only has the link to the eBook Suzie requested, but it also suggests that she request a free demo of our software.

The “Thank You” page is more than good manners, the real purpose is to move Suzie farther down the sales funnel by making a strong case for requesting a demo of our product.

There is another form on the thank you page for her to request the demo. We decided to use a smart form so Suzie won’t have to fill out any form fields that she already completed. The navigation has returned to the landing page in case she isn’t ready to request a demo but wants to browse through our site.

If she does request the demo (our real goal) she will get the obligatory email acknowledgment and another thank you page with further instructions, along with other resources that she might be interested in such as blog articles or other eBooks we may be offering. We want Suzie to view us as an authority long before we do the actual demo.



*Figure 14: Landing Page Campaign Flow*

If Suzie is content with her eBook and not quite ready for the demo, we're not worried... Suzie is in our database and will be hearing from us with the offer of the free demo again once she's had enough time to go through the eBook.

By the way, if we collected Suzie's phone number, why not give her a call to see how she enjoyed the eBook and see if we could be of any additional service?

Giving away free eBooks is great branding, but it's a top-of-the-funnel activity. The demo, however, is farther down the sales funnel because Suzie is requesting something of us, and it requires interaction with her. Spoiler alert...the secondary offer is the real objective.

## Tips for Effective Landing Page Design

So what does an effective landing page look like? The simple answer is it can look however you want, as long as it contains some important and necessary elements. Here's a list of tips to creating an effective landing page while making it your own.

### Define Success

In order to accomplish your goals, you have to know what they are. Is this an eCommerce website focused on transactions? Is the purpose to generate leads, or is it about branding, relationship building, or increasing your database through membership registration? A good marketer will often start at the bottom of the sales funnel and work their way up to the point where the visitor first enters the funnel.



*Figure 15: Example of a Sales Funnel*

## **Define Your Customer**

It's not about you. Many businesses feel compelled to tell their story to who they perceive is a captive audience. But there's no captive audience on the Internet. Check your ego at the door: it's just too easy for a visitor to leave and find what they really want. This is where you want to start designing your buyer personas.

## **Separate Domain Names?**

Most businesses consider their homepage as a landing page. That may be acceptable in some instances, but in most cases it's not always the best choice. Your landing page may be part of a microsite or single page with its own domain name. You might consider one or more vanity names targeting a specific product or service. That's particularly effective when the domain will be visible on items like printed material or PPC ads.

## **Wireframing**

A wireframe is a sketch of a page layout. Start by listing all of the elements that go on the page and lay them out on a piece of paper. You should do this before you write the copy because the space available will dictate the amount of copy you have to work with. Make sure that you place the most important elements above the fold (the spot on the page where most visitors will have to scroll down to see more).

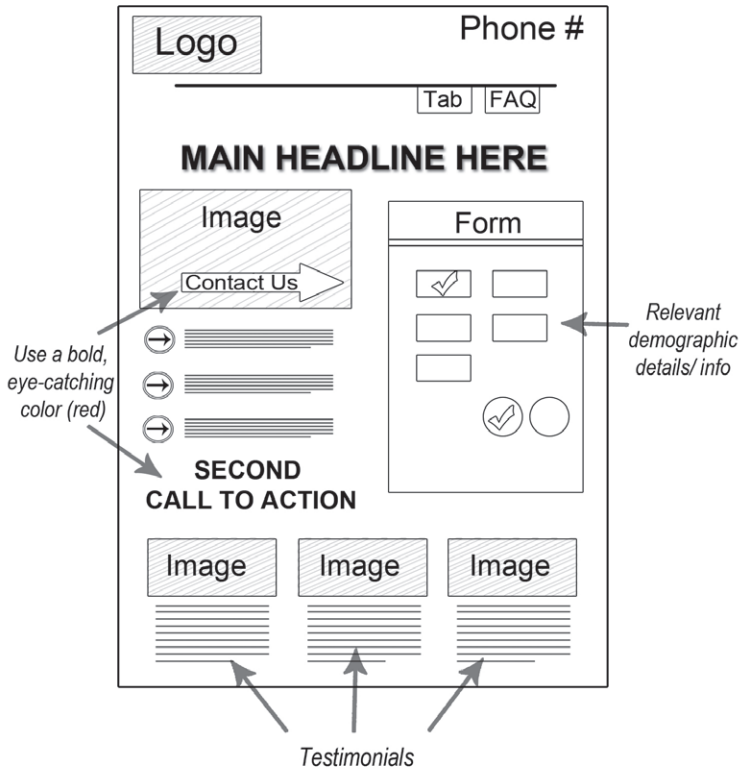


Figure 16: Landing Page Wireframe

## Copywriting

As we mentioned before, people don't read on the Internet, they scan. They see headlines, bullet points and graphics. It's important your headline refers back to what the visitor was looking at before they landed on your page. Only

about 20% of your visitors will actually read the body copy (which should still be well-written).

Don't forget the call to action! You might test matching the call to action with the headline since that's almost certainly the one element on the page that you can be sure people will read.

## **Testing and Tweaking**

This isn't an activity for your spare time. It's something that should be scheduled at regular intervals. Examine your metrics, make incremental changes and re-examine the effect. Don't make too many changes at once or you won't know what you did to affect the changes. Your testing and adjustments should match your original goals (transactions, lead generation, branding and education, relationship building, registrations, viral marketing).

## **Best Practices and Trends**

Just search "*landing page best practices*" in Google, and a whole page worth of blog posts and articles will come up. So what do you focus on? We'll here's a list of the landing page best practices I feel are the most important ones to consider in today's consumer landscape.

*Mobile:* It's the first one on my list for a reason. Entire websites are now being designed for mobile devices first, and desktops as a consideration. The odds are very high that your landing page will be viewed on an array of different sized mobile devices as much or more than desktops. Did you ever try filling out a tiny form with little buttons on a smartphone? Enough said.



*Two-Step Opt-In Process:* There is a growing trend towards removing the form from the primary landing page and persuading the visitor to click-through to proceed to the next step. The psychology behind this is to avoid the initial impression an opt-in form creates: that you are asking instead of giving. Clicking on the offer button triggers the form to appear, and by now users have decided they want your offer.

*Targeting Specific Verticals:* Creating a landing page for a specific industry allows you to use industry jargon and position your product or service to the way it would be used in that specific vertical market.

*Targeting Decision Makers:* This comes back to a well thought out buyer persona. In most cases, your persona will be a decision maker. Don't count on an employee to bring your message to the attention of the person you are really trying to reach.

*Retargeting:* Just because the customer left your landing page doesn't mean they're out of reach. Many brands are using retargeting technology to start showing their banner ads to consumers who have previously visited their landing page. Why not? They've already shown interest in your product or they wouldn't have been there in the first place.

*Testimonials:* An oldie but goodie. Especially effective if you can drop the name of a recognizable brand.

*The Halo Effect:* You're only as good as the company you keep, and name-dropping brand names that you service psychologically extends some of that prestige to you.

*Flat Design:* A trend that has been around for a few years, but still just a trend. No shadows, gradients, beveled edges, reflections or textures. A very clean and simple two-dimensional design concept.

*Descriptive Buttons:* Sure, you can get lazy and use the good ol' "Sign Up" or "Click Here" or the reliable "Submit" to label your buttons. Your buttons should be viewed as an extension of our call-to-action and the trend (and best practice) is to use button copy that actually aligns with what the buyer wants: "Try it for Free" or "Start Your Trial Now!"

*Contextual Imagery:* Much like product placement on TV, there is a growing trend towards featuring products being used in real life situations instead of the product alone.

*Video:* No secret here. Video is creeping into every aspect of our lives from social media to, you guessed it - landing pages. Best practice is, and hopefully will always be, setting the video to be user-activated. Users want the illusion of being in control, and taking that away from them by force-feeding your media on them is just not going to help you get your message across.

Trends happen for a reason; either they have always been best practices in other media and are just catching up to digital marketing, or changes in technology (mobile and retargeting, for example) are redefining design and strategies.

## Elements of a Landing Page

So how many elements need to be on a landing page? The correct answer is as many as necessary, no more and no less.

These are just some of the items that may go on a landing page. It's not meant to be a checklist of items that should be on every landing page:

- Logo
- Descriptive Tagline
- Conversion Button
- Testimonials
- Offer Explanation
- Headline
- Technical Specifications
- Guarantees
- Dynamic Media
- Deadlines
- Links to More Information

## Copy Tips

- Use half the copy that you would use in printed material
- Landing page headlines should match the headlines that got the visitor to click

- Nothing more than needed, nothing less than needed
- Don't waste valuable real estate with a welcome message
- "You" and "your" trumps "we" and "our"
- People only read the first few words of bullets and paragraphs
- People read the beginning and end of lists, not the middle
- Keep your first few paragraphs short and inviting
- Alternate long and short paragraphs
- Paragraphs shouldn't be longer than four or five lines
- Numerals have more impact than written numbers

## **Campaign Killers**

There are a number of common landing page mistakes that can ruin the hard work put into every other component of a digital marketing strategy. These campaign killers might seem like simple mistakes, but they have a negative impact on conversion rates (which means your bottom line suffers too!).

Here are the landing page campaign killers you need to avoid:

*Too Much Text:* As mentioned multiple times, people don't read, they scan. They see images, headlines, and bullet points. You have two to eight seconds before potential customers decide to leave your page or spend some time on

it. How much is the right amount of text? No more or less than you need to make your case.

*Error Pages, Broken Links and Anything That Does Not Work:* Nothing diminishes confidence like a website that doesn't work. Even worse for landing pages because, unlike a website with multiple paths, a landing page has a very specific path down the sales funnel. Anything broken on the path becomes a dead-end.

*Mandatory Form Fields:* Consumers don't like giving up their personal info for fear of finding themselves on yet another list. Unless you're using required information to pre-screen submissions (where the cost of screening exceeds the value of capturing contact information) you're more likely to get a submission if you try to gather only the most essential information. There will be plenty of time to request their personal information and telephone numbers once you have their basic information and have established a relationship with them. As a general rule, the less you ask for, the more you'll get.

*Reset Buttons:* Have you ever intentionally used a reset button? Have you ever gotten so lost in filling out a simple form that you just give up and reset the entire form? No, of course not. At best a reset button is useless. At worst, a consumer may inadvertently click on it instead of the submit button and delete everything they just filled in. It's hard enough to get them to fill it in the first time, what are the chances they'll fill it in a second time?

*No Email Privacy Information Next to the Email Field:* Few people actually read a lengthy privacy policy, but most consumers are comforted when you do have one. The

mistake is burying it deep on the page when you should be linking to it right at the point where they make the decision whether to submit your form.

*Lack of Communication Choices:* Everyone has their favorite communication method. Some people like to talk with a human being on the phone, and other people like live chat because of the spontaneity and anonymity. Others like the convenience of just filling out a form and shifting the initiative to follow-up to the merchant. There is statistical evidence that having a phone number as an option actually increases form submission simply because of the additional confidence that the merchant is accessible if necessary.

*Inadequate Shipping and Pricing Information:* No one likes surprises when it comes to money. Not making the consumer's price clear (including shipping and taxes) is a recipe for abandonment.

*Too Many Links Leading to Too Many Destinations:* Every parent learns that you don't ask a child what they want for breakfast. You ask them if they want Cheerios or oatmeal. You manage their choices. If you give them too many distractions they wander off the path. Keep it simple and focused.

## **Landing Page Development**

The biggest obstacle to in-house landing page optimization is a lack of resources. In mid-sized companies, the marketing department is typically overloaded. In smaller

companies, the owner or the staff, even if they have the right credentials, are too busy minding the core business.

Here are some of the considerations you need to evaluate to help you decide if you have the in-house capability to execute on your landing page strategy or if it may make more business sense to outsource to a professional.

*Resources:* It's tempting to try and do things yourself or assign it to existing staff. Take into consideration the true cost of doing it in-house. Are you diverting staff members from other necessary duties? Are you paying them to learn on the job when an agency or consultant may already have the know-how? You may indeed have the talent under your own roof, but be mindful of the true costs.

*Aptitude:* Most individuals are either left-brained or right-brained. That is to say technically or creatively inclined. Since a landing page campaign is a combination of creative and analytical, a technically oriented team or individual isn't likely to come up with the compelling creative, and the creative team may not be able to interpret the data. That applies to agencies as well as you and your staff.

*Experience:* Agencies may have strengths in both creative and analytics, however, they may not have the full array of skill sets necessary to do it any better than you can in-house. Consider the traffic to your landing page. If your current levels of web traffic are insufficient, make sure you work with a consultant that can deliver traffic as well as conversions, either in full or in conjunction with your in-house team.

## **Don't Neglect Landing Page Optimization**

Landing pages are unique in that they are tied directly to a greater marketing campaign that undoubtedly represents a significant investment for your company. This is not the place to drop the ball and hand the assignment over to whoever has time to deal with it.

Landing page design is a marketing assignment that employs a great deal of psychology. A common mistake companies make is to assign the design of a landing page to their IT department or even their graphics department as a side job when it should be a focal point of their current marketing campaign.

This chapter is not intended to be a step-by-step handbook, but rather as a reality check for CEOs and business owners who are about to make an investment in their companies growth and profit.

### **25-Point Landing Page Checklist**

- Does your headline say what the page is about and relate to your PPC ad?
- Does your sub-headline further refine your message?
- Is your landing page focused on a single purpose and persona?
- Could someone understand the message in 5-10 seconds?
- Does the visitor understand what they will get in exchange for contacting you?



- Does the copy focus on benefits rather than features?
- Are you using a unique image that tells the story? (no generic stock photos)
- Do you have an obvious call-to-action?
- Does your landing page look professional?
- Is your opt-in form visible without having to scroll down the page?
- Did you eliminate extraneous navigation from the page?
- Are you asking for the minimum amount of contact details?
- Is there continuity between your landing page and your advertising messages?
- Do you have a privacy policy link or statement near the submit button?
- Is your submit button more interesting than just “submit”?
- Is your landing page as focused as your elevator speech?
- Did you articulate the value of your giveaway item (whitepaper, discount, etc.)?
- Did you use trust icons and testimonials where appropriate?
- Did you offer multiple contact options (phone, email form, live chat, etc.)?
- Did you use light boxes (pop-outs) to offer additional information without the visitor having to leave

the page?

- Are you using your thank you page to present a secondary offer to the visitor?
- Is your offer time-sensitive enough to create urgency?
- Are you creating separate landing pages to segment your leads? (PPC, display advertising, email, print, etc.)
- Have you designed your page as a template so that you can repurpose the page in the future?
- If you have a multi-step process, have you been clear about how long it will take to complete? Example: take our two-question survey.

# 8

**SEO:**

## **THE MORE THINGS CHANGE THE MORE THEY STAY THE SAME**

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*By Andre Savoie*

The longer we work in the world that is now called digital marketing, it's becoming glaringly obvious that the more things change, the more they stay the same.

That's the point of this chapter: in order to get to the top of search engines and make sure searchers are finding you instead of your competitors, the same tactics that have worked for years are still the ones that work today.

Now, that's not to say things aren't changing. They are.

At the epicenter of all these changes is one simple fact that has been the case from when the Internet was created, and you don't need a chart or industry statistics to prove it:

*The primary reason that people are consuming digital information at such a rapidly increasing rate is that they find it useful and trustworthy.*

In spite of all the jokes about not believing what you read on the Internet, the truth is the large portion of digital information people find and use online is trustworthy. This also means that search engines like Google, Yahoo and Bing are doing a good job of delivering trustworthy, relevant results when people search for information.

Every client we talk to wants to know what it's going to take for them to get in front of people searching for what they provide. Unfortunately, it's not a simple explanation for a few reasons. In this chapter, we're going to do our best to answer that question by taking a close look at the recent trends in search engine optimization. We'll also share our insider tips that might just launch you one step ahead of your competitors.

But first, since we started out this chapter by saying “the more things change, the more things stay the same,” I want to share a few specific things that we've learned which will help set the stage for the strategy discussion later to come.

## **Change is Constant**

The very nature of the Internet and how we use it continues to evolve at a rapid pace, and there is a constant flow of new technologies hitting the market.

Need proof?



*Figure 17: #Hashtag*

Chances are 5 years ago you had no idea what a hashtag was! Today you still might not know exactly what they are, but you've definitely heard of one.

The point is that continued learning and improvement is a requirement in order to stay relevant in an increasingly competitive digital environment.

## **Fundamentals Still Work**

All of the basic SEO strategies we've been doing for years are still highly effective and they really haven't changed. I refer to them as SEO blocking and tackling.

These strategies include:

- Well optimized metadata with keywords (and location for local businesses)
- Well written, original and interesting content
- Good site structure including easy to navigate pages
- Using free tools provided by search engines to monitor website performance

## You Can't Fool Google

This is another one of those rules that don't change. No one fools Google and gets away with it...at least not for long. Over the years, the schemes have come and gone, and those who jump on the bandwagon usually see short-term gains followed by long-term losses.

No one can ethically promise you first page organic placement on search engines no matter how convincing their sales pitch might sound. And if you choose to bend the rules, chances are you'll get burned.

## Relevance and Trust Are Hard to Build

Every time someone types in a search phrase, search engines have to sort through millions of potential results in order to serve up those they deem are best. How is this done and why do certain sites show up higher than others? Let's do a quick review.

If you were to sum up the job of a search engine in one sentence it would be this: *give users the most relevant and trustworthy results for a given search.*

That's it.

Let's use an example to illustrate the point.

Remember when Robin Williams died? The story was everywhere.

If you did a Google search for "Robin Williams suicide," what type of sites would you expect to find near the top:

- News sites like Huffington Post or USA Today with in-depth reviews of the story and his life; or

- Small blogs who talk about the same story

This isn't meant to demean small blogging sites. Rather, it's to illustrate that people expect to see sources they trust for a given type of search – and in this case, it's news sites. News sites are trusted. However, your website that's only been up for a year doesn't enjoy the same trust, and you have to build that over time.

## You Are Being Graded on a Curve

Professionals who have been in the industry for any length of time will acknowledge this fact: you can execute the exact same SEO strategy on two different sites in two different verticals and see varying results.

The reason is Google (and the other search engines) grades you on a curve.

The Headmaster at the high school my boys attend is an English professor and he loves challenging people with new words. Recently he chose this word for a lesson: *serendipity* - the occurrence and development of events by chance in a happy or beneficial way.

Or put another way... a “happy accident.”

Applying this to the digital marketing world, if your goal is to rank for searches related to something less competitive, say “raising pink fluffy caterpillars”, SEO is going to be a much easier task. That's because there just aren't a lot of people who are competing for this space on the Internet.

It's quite common in niche industries or certain professional services to have an easier time getting online visibility for less competitive phrases.

Some might call it good SEO. I call it “serendipity.”

Alternatively, if you are a divorce lawyer in Dallas, TX, your vocabulary word might be “misfortune.”

Some clients have the misfortune of being in a highly competitive industry with well-entrenched competitors, and the same strategy which worked for “pink fluffy caterpillars” may not show any results for our poor divorce attorney.

It’s important to understand this concept because it affects:

- The strategy you choose
- How long you can expect before seeing results
- How much it’s going to cost for you to get meaningful visibility

The bottom line is that you’ve got to understand what you’re up against because for every potential search result, you’re being graded on a curve.

## **Everyone Does It: Crawl, Walk, Run**

Impatience seems to be another one of those things that never changes.

Customers come to us and want to know how long it will take to get to the top of search results by tomorrow. Never mind the fact that they don’t have a website yet and their competitors have been investing in digital marketing for 10 years.

The notion of “crawl, walk, run” has strong relevance to digital marketing and in particular to SEO, because you



can't begin running so to speak unless you've "crawled" and "walked" first.

What does this look like from a process standpoint? We'll take a closer look in the next section, but the big picture is that you can't jump ahead in the process, which looks something like this in most cases:

- Keyword Research
- Competitive Analysis
- Website Optimization
- Address Domain Authority
- Content Strategy
- Social Media Strategy
- Reporting

## **The AdaptiveSEO Solution**

Over the last few years, our search behaviors have evolved as our ability to access the Internet on mobile devices has become easier.

This "evolution" of search behavior is the basis of WSI's proprietary approach to search engine optimization. We call it WSI AdaptiveSEO™.

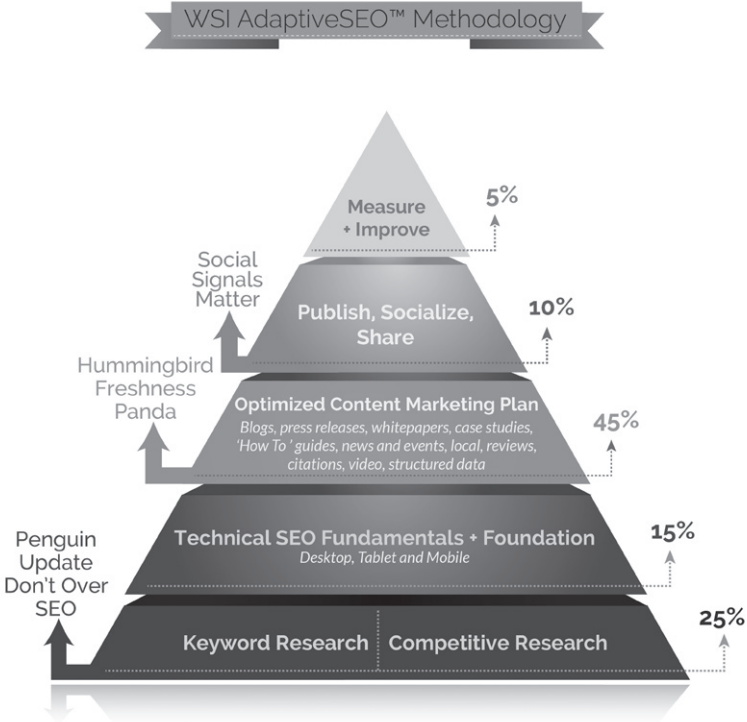


Figure 18: WSI's AdaptiveSEO™ Methodology

At the heart of WSI's AdaptiveSEO™ methodology is the core fundamentals we touched on earlier. After those initial steps are completed, the focus shifts to building on those fundamentals with strategies like content marketing, domain development, and social media. Reporting is always the top element of the strategy as good reporting allows for informed decisions.

The reason we've chosen to call it *adaptive* is while the fundamentals are set, we select the appropriate individual strategies so that we can adapt to each business we

work with, their industry, and their competitive environment. So let's take a look at the critical elements of an AdaptiveSEO strategy.

## **Keyword and Competitive Research**

Choosing the right keywords is a critical part of any SEO strategy. This has been the case for years and will never change.

Keyword research is a fascinating topic and can potentially be very complicated, especially for large website projects. However, you can distil the core elements of good keyword research into the following categories:

### **Evaluating Keywords**

The first priority is evaluating keywords. A few of the factors to take into consideration include:

*Activity Levels:* It's always interesting to see the differences between what a customer thinks are busy keywords and which are not. Another good tip is to look for phrases that searchers actually use as opposed to industry terms. For example: "pest management" is an industry term with considerably fewer searches than "pest control."

*Trends:* Tools like Google Insights show trends over time for a given topic. This can be incredibly helpful to make sure you're not pursuing an area of diminishing interest and missing out on breakout opportunities.

*Commercial Intent:* We look for modifiers that are commercially viable rather than research related. For instance, “pest control” is a less commercially valuable phrase than “pest control companies” for obvious reasons.

*Identify Long Tail Phrases:* In almost every research project, we find that shorter phrases hold more search traffic than longer ones. Consider the case of legal professionals. The phrase “lawyer” shows high search volume and might show a variety of results in local markets. However, a phrase such as “collaborative divorce attorney” indicates an entirely different type of search intent. These long tail phrases, while not as busy, are incredibly important to identify.

Once you’ve created your list of targeted keywords, the next step is to build a strategy to pursue them. More on that in the next section.

## **Competitor Review**

Almost everyone agrees that imitation is the highest form of flattery, and you can certainly learn a lot from studying and imitating those who are ahead of you in search results.

Typically speaking, we perform a competitive analysis on three to five of the top websites for a given search result in order to better understand:

- What keywords they are using
- The type of content strategy they are employing
- What types of sites link to them
- How are they utilizing social media (if at all)

- Use of paid search advertising

By gathering this type of information, you can get a clear picture of the effort required to match or overtake your competitors.

## **Technical AdaptiveSEO Fundamentals**

Once your keyword and competitive research are complete, it's time to shift focus to your website. The primary goal of website optimization is not to trick search engines, but rather to help them easily understand what your site is about and properly categorize it.

WSI uses an exhaustive internal checklist for website optimization, but the high points are as follows:

- Review website for good site structure (navigation, etc.)
- Assess the mobile experience
- Use best practices for on-page optimization
- Page titles and descriptions
  - On page content
  - Sitemaps and robots files
- Evaluate website content for areas of expansion and improvement
- Fine tune conversion elements of the website (calls-to-action, etc.)

## Mobile SEO

These days, mobile affects every facet of digital marketing, and SEO is no exception. When Google updated their algorithm to start using mobile-friendliness as a ranking signal, they had the betterment of the site user experience in mind. In fact, in the developed world, more searches are conducted on mobile than a desktop. Which means ensuring your website is built and optimized for Mobile SEO is no longer a “nice-to-have”, it is an absolute must.

As part of WSI’s AdaptiveSEO™ methodology, we have a checklist of all the requirements a site needs to have to in order for it to be considered mobile-friendly.

Here are a few of the things you should ensure your site is optimized for:

*PageSpeed:* Is the time it takes to fully display the content on a specific page. This is even more important for mobile users since they are “on-the-go” and therefore have less time to wait for pages to load than someone using a desktop/laptop who may be sitting at their desk or on their couch watching a show. Mobile users are looking for specific information, now, and will quickly abandon a search if a site doesn’t load fast enough. A PageSpeed score by Google ranges from 0-100 points, the higher your score the better, but anything above 85 is excellent. One important note here is that your PageSpeed score can change, so it’s something you want to keep an eye on at least month-to-month (hence the reporting stage of AdaptiveSEO).

*Blocked Content:* One of the elements Google’s Mobile-Friendly Test will look at to determine how well optimized a site is for mobile is blocked content such as CSS, JavaScript or images. A mobile search spider wants to see

everything that a user sees. This helps the search engines to determine if your site is, in fact, responsive or if you have a different mobile site altogether. Either way, leave this mobile SEO element to the professionals as adjustments to your CSS and JavaScript should only be handled by your IT department or a digital marketing professional.

*Title Tags and Meta Descriptions:* These are part of any standard SEO checklist. However, when it comes to mobile you need to remember that you're working with less screen space, so these need to be as concise as possible while still providing meaningful information to the mobile user. For title tags, you're looking at a 55 characters or less limit and for meta descriptions its 115 characters (at a maximum, if you can go shorter that do it). Also, make sure you don't take the easy way out and use duplicate tags and descriptions across multiple site pages (Google doesn't like this and it'll just negatively affect your ranking). Writing title tags and meta descriptions to be meaningful to the user and the page content is somewhat of an art, so again something you may want to leave to your digital marketing professional or agency.

## **NAP Consistency**

One of the more recent developments in SEO has been an increased focus on the way your website is listed across the Internet on legitimate website directories. SEO professionals have noticed a direct correlation between the consistency of data about your business from one website to the next and your rankings for targeted phrases.

For instance, if your business is listed as "ABC Companies Inc." on Yelp and Angie's List, but listed as

“ABC Inc.” on Facebook and Yahoo, this creates duplicate or competing data and dilutes the authority of the website.

This same type of data confusion can occur with:

- Business names (trade names vs. legal names)
- Addresses (old addresses, multiple locations, etc.)
- Phone numbers (local numbers, toll-free numbers and website tracking numbers)
- Business categories

Given the importance of data consistency, SEO professionals focus on cleaning up and building what we call NAP consistency – names, addresses and phone number.

The process for doing this can be somewhat tedious. It involves reviewing listings at major website directories where your profile can be claimed, verified and updated. The process can take several months as some directories are manually reviewed and can take time to process submissions.

## **Domain Profile Review**

Historically, one of the major factors in SEO is the overall strength of the domain. By strength, we are referring to the number and quality of websites, blogs, social media portals and directories across the Internet which link back to your site.



## Top 30 Difference-Making Factors in Competitive Markets

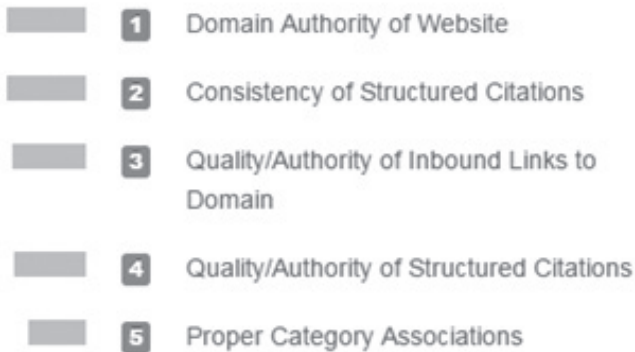


Figure 19: Showcasing the Importance of Domain Authority<sup>5</sup>

Let's say for example that you have a competitor who has been interviewed by *Time Magazine* and has a link pointing to their website from Time.com.

Obviously, *Time* is a very powerful website!

This type of link indicates that your competitor's site is a valid resource and may help search engines trust the content on that website more than yours, assuming you don't have the benefit of a link from *Time Magazine*.

Few SEO professionals dismiss the importance of having good links back to your site. The real issue is how do you ethically get more links?

In recent years, many websites were hit with penalties for building links in an unnatural fashion. Google's Penguin update has brought the focus back to natural ways of building the visibility of a website.

## **Tips for Developing A Natural, Safe Linking Strategy**

*Link Review:* Conduct a review and cleanup of past links that may be holding your site back. Link removal can be difficult, but it's worth the time and effort if you have problem links in your profile.

*Local Directory Listings:* Claiming and verifying local profiles might be the #1 single piece of SEO advice we can give, especially for local business owners. Make sure to claim your free business listings on every major local site you can find, starting with the big ones like Google, Bing and Yahoo, as well as secondary sites like Yelp, Merchant Circle and other similar sites. As you go through the process, it's important to use a consistent set of data so that search engines find the same address, phone number, and website. This consistency across directories can greatly improve local visibility, especially in local search rankings.

*Reviews:* While not technically an SEO strategy, reviews are fast becoming a critical piece of the search marketing puzzle. There are many powerful free sites that allow you to build and manage customer reviews via a dashboard. At a minimum, you should focus on building reviews in places like Google+.

*Social Profiles:* Claim and validate your social profiles on sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. While we're not advocates of claiming hundreds of social profiles just for the sake of doing it, we recommend claiming the major social profiles so that you can at least claim your spot there, and make sure that the critical data (again phone numbers, website URL, etc.) are all correct and up to date.

*Website Directories:* Certain niche and targeted paid website directories are still a viable strategy if you evaluate them by whether or not they can bring you good quality website traffic. For instance, if you are a manufacturer, there are quite a few high quality directories that charge annual fees for inclusion that might make sense to consider, as those directories offer powerful website links as well as highly qualified traffic.

*Content Promotion and Link Outreach:* Link outreach in the form of contacting other websites that you might potentially develop a partnership with to share content is always a good idea and has never gone out of style. If you can locate sites that you can contribute content to or exchange information with that usually benefits both parties.

Now that your keyword research is done, your website is completely optimized and your link profile has been addressed, it's time to talk about long-term content and social media strategies.

## **Optimized Content Marketing Plan**

I will sum up what we've found to be the single most effective content strategy in two simple words: *quality wins*.

Simply put, creating high-quality content is not only the best way to rank well with search engines, but it's also the most cost-effective way to turn website visitors into customers.

I'll take it a step further and say that if you put out low-quality content, you're wasting your time and money.

Nobody wants to read a generic 300-word article on how to get divorced, so why bother!?

In today's search results, you'll find articles and blog posts of 1,500 words or more with lots of images, illustrations or graphics and links to other resources that educate the reader on a given topic. Creating this type of high-quality resource should be the goal no matter what type of content medium you decide to pursue.

Here are a few considerations for building a high-quality content strategy:

*Service Related Content and Blogging:* What types of website content do you have planned for the year? Do you have enough content on your website that covers each of the products or services you offer? If not, consider adding pages as needed, then developing a blogging strategy to provide additional content about those products or services with the goal of adding value and solving problems.

*Premium Content:* In the last year or so, many site owners have turned to creating what we refer to as premium content that users might want to download in exchange for an email address, or possibly register for. This type of content usually takes the form of advanced reports, infographics, eBooks or even webinars. The type of premium content you produce will be specific to your business, but it can be a valuable addition to your website and very enticing to users who are looking for more detailed information about their problems or concerns.

For more information on how to put a quality content marketing strategy together for your business, please revert back to Chapter 4.

## **Publish, Socialize, and Share**

Creating great content is only half the battle. Just because you publish it doesn't mean it'll get read. Once you write your content you'll have to do just as much PR and outreach work to amplify and extend your content as far as you can. In doing this you'll help to increase the social signals (re-tweets, likes, comments, reviews, +1s) associated with your content, which is ultimately an indicator of how valuable your content is to your users and a reflection of you being an authority.

Whether search engines, like Google, take your social signals into account when ranking your content is still a hot topic in the SEO world, but more and more it looks like this will be an element of consideration if not now, then in the future.

What we do know though is that by extending the reach of your content and building your content authority you are more likely to benefit from:

- Increased inbound links and citations due to people finding your content more
- Increased positive reviews due to people liking what you have to say
- Decreased bounce rate, higher time on site and more repeat visitors to your website since you've now become a source of valuable information

All of which are elements that can positively impact your SEO rankings and why activities around publishing, socializing and sharing your content is part of the WSI AdaptiveSEO™ methodology.

## Measure

Reporting is the final piece of a good SEO strategy, but it's by no means least important. You might argue that it's actually the most important, and that's why it's a key component of any AdaptiveSEO strategy.

Reporting is also one of those areas that is often made more complicated than it needs to be. The amount of data that is available to digital marketers is simply overwhelming, so knowing how to sort through the data to stay focused on the key metrics is perhaps the most significant thing you can do.

A few tips we've learned about good reporting are:

**Know Your KPIs (Key Performance Indicators).** Most well run businesses know what their KPIs are, and your digital marketing strategy is no different. Whether it's conversions, phone calls, eBook downloads or organic visits, have a small dashboard which keeps your KPIs at a glance organized by regular intervals.

**Integrate Reporting As Much As Possible.** If you can track all of your various KPIs in one place, you'll have an easier time evaluating overall performance. For instance, look for tools such as call tracking that integrate with other tools like Google Analytics. Having all of the data in one place is a huge time saver and helps you make more informed decisions about ROI.

**Compare Apples to Apples.** Each metric within a digital marketing report stands on its own merit. For instance, traffic from Google AdWords will perform much differently than organic traffic or traffic from referring websites.

It's important to compare metrics on their own for the purposes of drawing conclusions when it comes to reporting, and remember that you can't always compare data just because it's the same date range.

**Don't Sweat Every Trend.** This is probably the biggest pitfall of reporting and most common issue we encounter – the temptation to draw conclusions from short term trends in data. For instance, if your website traffic is down for the month, it's easy to conclude that perhaps your rankings dropped or something is wrong with your website. However, it's not always that simple. It could be something like seasonal interest, or just a slow overall month. My advice is to look at larger date ranges where you can see trends develop as short term data is not always trustworthy for decision making.

## Three Pieces of Advice

I'd like to close with three pieces of advice that I offer to every business owner, manager or marketing partner I work with:

### #1 - Oversight is Your Responsibility

Over the last few years, we've seen more and more cases where website owners hired a consultant or agency to perform digital marketing services under the notion that these consultants could run things for them without proper supervision.

Yes, the digital marketing field can be complicated, but if your current consultant or agency cannot explain what

they're doing and why, I suggest you look elsewhere. As a manager or business owner, it's your responsibility to oversee all of the activities going on with your website and social media platforms.

Don't give up the management of your website to someone else without fully understanding what they're doing and why!

## **#2 - There Are No Straight Lines in the Digital World**

When it comes to digital marketing, rarely do you perform one task and directly see it correlate to something else. There are no straight lines.

For instance, you don't see your rankings get better just because you claimed or updated your local listings, or because you optimized your website.

The effect is cumulative.

Over time, you see your visibility improve as you tend to all of the fundamentals we outlined here and create high-quality content. But rarely do you do one thing and directly see it result in something else.

I wish it were that simple and linear, but it's not.

## **#3 - If It Was Easy, Everyone Would Do It**

A dear friend of mine once gave me this piece of wise advice: "Google is not just sitting around waiting for you to launch your website."

What he meant was that for any action you take – say optimizing your website or starting a blog - one of your



competitors has already done it. Maybe years before you even started thinking about it.

So don't expect to simply put up a blog or claim a few profiles and jump ahead of people who have invested significant time and money to build their digital presence. That's simply not how it works.

If you could build your own stunning website and attract thousands of customers, I'd start tomorrow.

If you could get to the top of search engines for just \$39 a month, I would sign up now!

If a listing in the local yellow directory could save your business, I'd do it.

But frankly it's not that easy or everyone would be doing it.



# 9

## MOBILE DEVICES: THEY ARE COMMANDING OUR ATTENTION

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*By Eric Cook*

### **How Has Mobile Changed?**

In the first edition of *Digital Minds* published in 2013, I wrote about the evolution of the “three screens” of communication as part of my chapter on mobile marketing. Starting with the *first screen* in the late 1920s when the television was conceived, we were taken online in the 1990s with the introduction of the World Wide Web and the *second screen* on the personal computer with the web browser. Then in 2007, Steve Jobs introduced us to the iPhone, which set the bar for all future mobile devices with

the use of a touch-screen and apps – essentially creating the smartphone category, now known as the *third screen*. Until recently, the TV continued to command a majority of our attention, but with the growing popularity of the mobile device, that’s all changing now.

Even back in December of 2012, the report, *Mobile Apps: We Interrupt This Broadcast* the mobile app company, Flurry (now owned by Yahoo) predicted the future amount of time spent on mobile devices and their inevitable impact on traditional broadcast media. As the desktop was quickly becoming an object in the rearview mirror, the new target of the mobile device was overtaking television. Apps continue to steal timeshare from desktop web usage and in 2015 it finally happened: mobile bumped the television from being America’s *first screen*. That’s right. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, we now are spending close to three hours every day on our mobile devices (two hours and 57 minutes to be exact), while time spent on TV has remained flat at two hours and 48 minutes. The media rating company, Nielsen, found that 84% of consumers are even using their mobile device as a supplementary “second screen” to the television. So even when consumers are watching TV, the mobile device is close by. Chances are you may even keep a tablet on the coffee table (like me) to use during commercials in your own household.

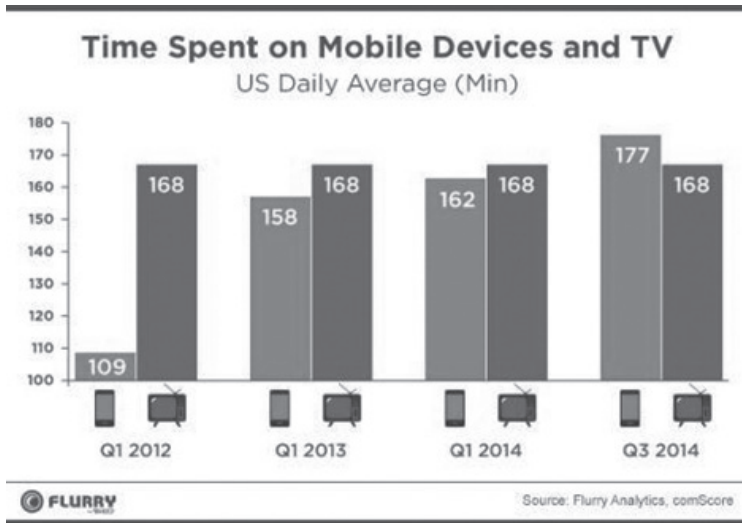


Figure 20: Time Spent on Mobile Devices and TV<sup>6</sup>

Whether you're a business owner, a personal user of mobile technology or both, one thing is certain – mobile is showing no signs of slowing down as the number one recipient of our digital attention. In this chapter we'll review some of the recent statistics that help reveal the emerging business opportunities around the mobile device, the growth of commerce over mobile (referred to as *mCommerce*) and how wearable technology is creating a whole new category of mobile devices. We'll also discuss how these devices are becoming more intelligent by knowing where we are - and how this is good for business - and what security concerns you need to be thinking about to keep all your customers' information safe.

While there are several areas where the mobile device plays an important role, other chapters in this book already address its importance when it comes to website development (i.e. responsive web design), paid search advertising and how your mobile presence can impact search visibility (SEO). In addition, with the continued popularity of social networking and the number of people using social apps to engage vs. the traditional computer, the statement “social = mobile” certainly rings true now more than ever. I’ll let the other chapters cover these topics. What I want you to take away from this chapter is how much mobile has taken over our lives, affects the way in which we manage consumer information and ultimately get you up to speed on some of the current mobile technology trends so you can start thinking about how this could impact your business. So now that you’ve got an idea of what we’ll focus on, let’s get started... we’ve got lots to talk about!

## **State of the Mobile Device**

To fully appreciate the magnitude of the mobile device and its impact on consumers, business and society, in general, it’s important to take a moment and review some of the current statistics surrounding mobile technology. Though you may not need convincing, these will certainly reinforce why it’s now more important than ever to ensure you’ve developed a mobile strategy as part of your overall digital marketing plan.

In his 2015 Socialnomics video, Erik Qualman presents a variety of interesting statistics related to the social economy and evolution of the “digital consumer”. I’ve

been a fan of @equalman (in case you want to follow him on Twitter) for years, frequently sharing his Socialnomics videos at conferences and with clients to get them thinking about how consumers are shifting. While that video shares some compelling stats about mobile technology, Qualman recently came out with a companion video focused on mobile called Mobilenomics.

Did you know...?

- That 90% of Tweets come from mobile devices, yet businesses spend less than 1% of their promotional efforts on mobile?
- That 70% of mobile searches lead to action within one hour, while it can take a month or longer on a desktop?
- That we respond to text messages on our phone in 90 seconds or less but take 90 minutes to do the same via email?

Think about it from your perspective: if you want to get a quick response from someone, do you send an email or text message?

Digital marketers today recognize the growing importance of mobile. According to a survey of global eCommerce digital marketers by eConsultancy and Adobe in early 2015, over 2/3 of respondents indicated they plan on increasing their investment in mobile strategies. Given that the average consumer checks their smartphone over 150 times per day<sup>7</sup>, there's a good reason for marketers to do what they can to get noticed via mobile.

Google found that 67% of consumers are more likely to make a purchase if a mobile site experience is positive, whereas 61% would leave a mobile site if they can't

immediately find what they are looking for. This is further reinforcement to have a solid mobile strategy in place (and to read our section on mobile-friendly website design in Chapter 2). Given that people are likely visiting your website every day on a mobile device, your site needs to be responsive and provide an enjoyable, user-friendly experience. With roughly 40% of online adults starting an activity on one device and finishing it on another, the process needs to be seamless for the visitor since we can no longer predict where a customer will start and stop in the process of investigating a business online.

Today we use our smartphones to follow breaking news, get turn-by-turn driving directions, play music, listen to podcasts, watch videos, send text messages, track our workouts, check email, connect with friends via social media, play games, scan receipts, follow our travel itineraries, share photos, check in and share our location – and yes, sometimes even make an actual phone call to have a conversation. Today 64% of American adults own a smartphone, up from 32% back in 2011<sup>8</sup>, and this number is even greater with the younger generations (as you can imagine).

To some, mobile is even becoming their “digital life-line”. You may not realize it, but there is a growing segment of smartphone dependent consumers who only have access to the online world through their mobile device, with 10% of American smartphone owners indicating they do not have any other form of high-speed Internet access at home beyond their phone’s data plan! It literally serves the function of being their only way to get online. Further, just over 30% of adult smartphone users report having *limited alternatives*, making the smartphone an essential connection to the world of online information. Until the mobile device,

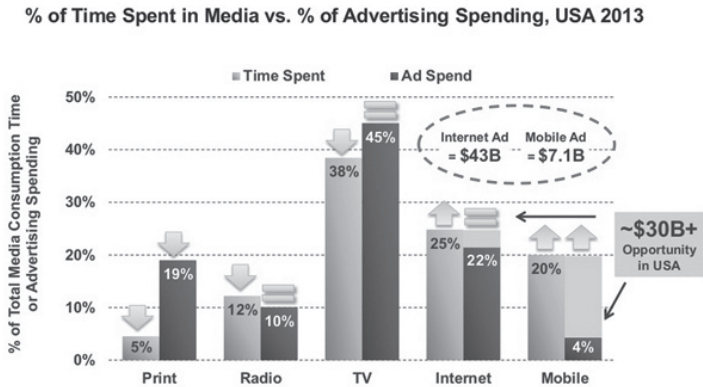


this segment of the population was not online and totally unreachable with your digital marketing efforts. But now, thanks to the smartphone, they are able to access digital content – including information about your business, creating an entirely new potential customer segment.

A study conducted by the Pew Research Center identified some of the most popular activities that smartphone owners performed over the past 12 months. These individuals were most likely to get information about a health condition (62%), access online banking (57%), look up real estate listings about a place to live (44%), research information about a job (43%) or look up government service information (40%). Sure social networking, text messages, and email are common functions too, but think about how these other activities would have been accomplished just a few short years ago before the advent of the mobile device. You'd have to schedule an appointment with a doctor, call your banker, speak with a Realtor, search the employment ads in the newspaper or make a call to the necessary government office (and likely spend a lot of time on hold waiting for an answer).

With eight out of ten Internet users in the U.S. now owning a smartphone and almost half owning a tablet<sup>9</sup>, there's a customer that is becoming increasingly less dependent on the traditional "desktop browser". Supporting this further, Mary Meeker, in her latest *State of the Internet* report, indicated that mobile advertising presents one of the largest opportunities in the U.S. due to the amount of time people are spending on their smartphones and the type of media that's being consumed. The value of this opportunity totals almost \$30 billion, yet there is still an overwhelming dependency on traditional print advertising in the business

community. As businesses discover the reach, power and measurability of mobile advertising, we expect this number to begin to shift with more ad dollars being spent in mobile.



**@KPCB** Source: Advertising spend based on IAB data for full year 2013. Print includes newspaper and magazine. \$30B+ opportunity calculated assuming Internet and Mobile ad spend share equal their respective time spent share. Time spent share data based on eMarketer 7/13 (adjusted to exclude outdoors / classified media spend). Arrows denote Y/Y shift in percent share. 15

Figure 21: Time Spent vs. Advertising Spending<sup>10</sup>

## Shopping and mCommerce

People are increasingly using their mobile devices to shop online and make purchases from the palm of their hand. This shift towards mobile commerce, known as mCommerce, is growing 42% annually over a four-year period according to Ipsos, a research firm hired by PayPal to study the impact of the mobile device on eCommerce. As a significant player in the eCommerce space itself, PayPal has seen mobile growth on its own network go from 1% of payment volume in 2010 to more than 20% last year. The

report also found that a third of online shoppers made at least one purchase with their smartphone in the past year, and 20% did so via a tablet. Outside the U.S., that number is even greater. For example, 68% of online shoppers in China used a smartphone to make a purchase in the last 12 months. In a similar study, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) found that just about half (47%) of consumers globally have made a purchase via their smartphone, up from 30% just two short years ago, with the leading countries being China, Turkey, and the UAE. according to Ipsos. This means whether your business is located in the U.S. or is in other countries, mCommerce is an opportunity you cannot afford to ignore.

When examining what activities consumers are performing on mobile devices in relation to mCommerce, PwC found the following related to retail activity:

- 49% -- Research products
- 49% -- Compare prices with competitors
- 31% -- Locate a store
- 25% -- Use a coupon
- 18% -- Check funding available before making a purchase
- 16% -- Access loyalty/rewards program
- 13% -- Scan a QR code
- 12% -- Pay at cashier
- 12% -- Receive a location-based offer
- 11% -- Check in via social media
- 4% -- Tweet the retailer about product or offer

This trend is expected to continue as Goldman Sachs estimates the total number of people who will make a purchase online with their mobile phone will be in excess of 530 million people worldwide (145.9 million in the U.S. alone according to eMarketer). Global sales will soar to \$626 billion by 2018, almost surpassing sales from *all* eCommerce transactions in 2013, which were \$638 billion.

In the U.S. alone, Statistica reports that mCommerce volume will rise to \$133.35 billion by 2018, an increase of almost 130% over the 2014 volume of \$58.07 billion. It's also worth noting, however, that mobile shoppers are also multi-device shoppers. GWI found that 90% of mobile shoppers also made purchases on other devices with the most common "other device" being desktop computers. The fact that mCommerce and eCommerce lines are still somewhat blurry as consumers are obviously comfortable on both platforms, further reinforces the importance of a seamless online experience, whether they start, end or visit mobile during the purchase journey. However it shakes out, it's evident there are billions of dollars on the table for businesses that are prepared to compete in the mobile economy.

Whew. That was a lot of numbers, percentages and statistics to digest. But even if you're not a "numbers person" the takeaway here is that your business sales on a mobile device has the potential for significant growth over the next several years.

Getting your marketing message seen by mobile shoppers means your business will likely need to provide discounts in your mobile advertising to get the best results (and grab their attention). In fact, the top three most attractive mobile advertising tactics that consumers respond to are: retail-related mobile ads (that included

information about discounts and sales), product reviews and product information.

## **JCPenny: A Real World mCommerce Example**

What may be thought of by some as the “Oldsmobile” of the retail industry, JCPenny recently announced the launch of a new and innovative feature to their mobile shopping app that allows customers to use their device’s camera to streamline the product search process. Launched on iOS initially, by the time this book is published it should be rolled out on Android as well. This new functionality allows users to take a photo of a product and search their massive database of products, across multiple categories with image recognition technology. Results will provide product information, consumer reviews, and even coupons to entice a purchase as well as allow instant purchase in just a few taps of the screen.

In an interview with *Mobile Commerce Daily*, JCPenny’s EVP of omnichannel, Mike Rodgers, shared the company’s insights on their mobile strategy.

“App users don’t like to spend a lot of time navigating around to various screens to find what they are looking for,” says Rodgers. With image recognition, the customer can simply snap a photo and let technology find items that most closely match and are available in their inventory. In addition to working on products (like your friend’s new shoes – snap a pic and see if you can get them at JCP.com), the app will also work on UPC barcodes, making it possible for the customer to take action immediately. He

continues, “whether a customer is shopping for a blender, dress, necklace or shower curtain, our new image recognition feature will find that exact item or similar items.”

With consumers already relying on mobile phones to find the latest deals online, it’s their goal to make the mobile app a virtual extension of the total shopping experience.

### **Wearables Add Enhanced Functionality**

With the recent introduction of the Apple Watch, the Cupertino giant has formally entered the wearable market and some would say has “legitimized” all of the prior wearable efforts from other vendors by stepping into the ring. But prior to Apple joining the wearable party, we’ve had smart devices - beyond the mobile phone - for quite some time. Personally, I’ve had a Fitbit on my wrist tracking my steps and daily activity since before the release of the first edition of *Digital Minds*. Google’s Glass, which is currently under re-development, (to produce a less expensive, consumer-friendly version), took wearable technology and put it right on your face. With Glass, it was possible to record your world in a first-person, hands-free way. This evolution will continue as wearable technology develops further. In February of 2015 Cisco Systems forecasted the total number of global wearable connected devices would reach 578 million by 2019 compared to 109 million in 2014. As you can see, there are certainly big expectations for the growth of wearable technology over the next several years.

As a continuation to the mCommerce section you just finished reading, the wearable is positioned to become the

next mobile payment device. When it comes to making a purchase, Stratos found that among U.S. smartphone users, more than two-thirds would prefer to make their purchase using a wearable device rather than their mobile device when making an in-store purchase. That's what Apple Pay is betting on, with users being able to authorize a transaction with the "flick of their wrist" on an Apple Watch and allow consumers to leave their credit card and smartphone in their pocket when shopping.

While we'll continue to see the traditional on-your-wrist devices such as smart watches and fitness trackers, we are already starting to see other types of wearables enter the market. All of these devices are gathering big data about what we do, how fast we do it, where we are doing it (more on that later) and who we are doing it with.

Writing for GovTech.com, Andrew Sheehy presents several areas where wearable technology stands to provide the biggest benefits. His article, entitled *8 Mind-blowing Uses of Wearable Technology (Seriously...)*, provides insight on some of the ways that wearables will play an important role in our daily lives. He categorizes the technology into three areas, body sensors, smart glasses and smart watches, all of which present an opportunity to tap into the ever-growing presence of artificial intelligence (AI) services like the assistant technologies of Google's *Now on Tap*, Apple's *Siri* and Microsoft's *Cortana*. Even IBM is providing access to mobile app developers to the Jeopardy champion *Watson*, their own supercomputer platform. Through our mobile devices and wearable connections, we'll have instantaneous access to information by asking, viewing or maybe even just thinking something to get an answer!

Imagine the industries that could be impacted (for the better) with creative use of wearable technology. Sheehy proposes massive shifts in healthcare, insurance, diet and nutrition, police and security, outdoor purists' navigation, fitness and more. Taking healthcare as just one example, we have body sensors that can collect data such as stride length and step count (for steps and activity), heart rate, respiration rate, skin temperature, breathing rate, sleep quality, calories burned, force of impact to the head in contact sports, speed and acceleration, etc.

Taking this data into consideration:

- One could employ the skills of a personal trainer (from anywhere in the world) to get healthier
- Medical issues could be tracked by physicians remotely, allowing patients to return home more quickly (yet still be under the watch of their doctor)
- Insurance companies could justify lower rates by having access to more accurate data on individuals' wellness activities, etc.

Of course, the thought of providing access to this type of data presents several security concerns, which will be addressed in more detail at the end of this chapter.

As mentioned earlier, Google's focus on Glass has shifted in recent months due to slow consumer acceptance and the \$1,000+ price tag. Yet they continue to play with heads up display (HUD) style wearable technology. In what was seen as a "poke" at Facebook, shortly after the social networking giant announced their \$2 billion acquisition of Oculus Rift, the virtual reality headset designed to transport you to your own virtual reality world, Google came out with their own low-tech version called Cardboard.



Costing the company nowhere near \$2 billion (and yes, it's made of *cardboard*), this device is designed to turn your smartphone into a 3D viewer and project specially-designed apps to provide a virtual experience. With one of their Cardboard apps, you can magically transport yourself into the middle of a Paul McCartney concert and actually "look around" to see the crowd and Sir Paul on stage right before your very eyes!

Released at Google's 2014 I/O Android developer conference, Cardboard is just over a year old now. In 2015 at I/O Google announced a companion device called Jump to produce immersive video content, which holds 16 GoPro cameras in a large circle, allowing users to create a complete 360-degree experience. If your business is one that relies on providing a high-quality visual experience, just imagine what this type of technology could do if the visual wearable trend continues. Their plan is to provide special YouTube viewing options for these Jump-created videos that will stream directly to your smartphone sitting on your face in a Cardboard device. Think of what that could mean not only to the movie industry, but for businesses that rely on the visual experience to sell their products, such as real estate, travel and tourism, luxury items, etc.

As the wearable market expands, one thing is for sure: we'll have a wealth of data at our fingertips on what consumers are doing. Research according to Statista indicates the data traffic of wearable devices was 15 petabytes per month in 2014, growing to 277 petabytes per month by 2018. When you think that we'll have devices like smart watches, smart glasses, heads-up displays (HUD), health and fitness trackers, etc., the savvy business will need to

figure out ways to manage and put this data to work for tangible business results.

## **Where Are You? Your Mobile Device Knows**

One of the advantages of a mobile device to business owners, particularly if your customers have to come to your business, like a restaurant, is that GPS technology is location aware. For GPS to work properly, however, you typically need to be outside with a clear line of sight to the sky, as GPS location depends on satellite signals and the ability for your device to be found to work properly. This is still the main way in which our phones know where we are today and is used for things like turn-by-turn driving directions or location-based searches. GPS makes it possible for your phone to answer with relevant results when you ask the question, “Siri, where is the closest ATM?” when you need some cash.

In the prior edition to this book, I provided an example of how I personally took advantage of a Foursquare offer through a partnership with American Express to save 15% off my breakfast while on vacation in San Diego. While that’s still very much possible, although this time around you’ll have to also use their Swarm app to complete the check-in process, we’re now seeing these types of services proactively push notifications while you’re out and about and maybe driving or walking by a place of interest. This technology sometimes referred to as geo-fencing, allows business owners to create hotspot areas based on GPS coordinates. When someone enters that area, your message can be pushed to their mobile device (assuming they have

opted-in for these types of specials or promotions). For businesses, this is a great way to get the customers' attention and make your business get noticed.

Google Think, the search giant's focus on what's next for businesses in the digital space, found in a recent survey of mobile users that 85% of them would be more likely to shop in stores that offered personalized coupons and exclusive offers. Just imagine if you could take the location of your customers or potential customers and use that knowledge to drive them into your store or engage them in a more immersive buying experience once they arrive, like specials or promotions.

One company that is using this to their advantage, and to the advantage of their customers, is Larky. Working closely with financial institutions like community banks and credit unions, they provide an financial institution with the ability to offer special rewards and offers that appear when someone is in the area and steps into the geo-fence, signaling to the Larky app an offer can be presented on behalf of the business. To take advantage of the special offer, all the customer needs to do is use that financial institution's debit or credit card to take advantage of the discount. You can see how this creates a win-win since the financial institution promotes their clients, people shop locally and by supporting their bank or credit union by using their card, they save money.

The mobile conference app, Topi, also uses geo-fencing technology for event organizers to define an event location. So when the app is downloaded, it automatically knows which event you're attending based on where you're standing, making registration much easier while increasing attendee participation and convenience.

But what happens if you're already inside a store or someplace where GPS just won't work? There have been many times, I'm sure, where this has happened to you. While most of the time it's noticeable because you likely no longer have reception for email, text messages or placing a phone call, your location is unavailable now too. In 2013, the folks at Apple thought of this very issue and introduced their iBeacon protocol, which uses Bluetooth low energy (BLE) proximity sensors to transmit a unique identifier from your mobile device. Now, even without GPS, your location can be identified, allowing for location-specific trigger events to be pushed to your mobile device and vice-versa.

Now referred to generically as beacon technology as other devices have implemented similar capabilities, imagine that same retail example of walking into a store to make a purchase. While GPS capabilities on my phone knew I was walking down the street where the local cycling shop is located, with beacon capability enabled, the store can get some information about me from my device. When enabled (assuming it's been enabled in the device's privacy settings), the store knows my name, what other purchases I may have made in the past, if I'm subscribed to their newsletter or what type of cycling I like (mountain bike, road racing, triathlons, etc.). This information can communicate back to the shop's computer system so they can see how many times I come to the store before making a purchase, or even what areas of the store I spend the most time in. If I've been in several times and have spent most of my time over by the fat tire bikes but have not made a purchase, maybe it's time to send me a special offer to convince me that now's the time to make that purchase!

Since beacon technology can be adjusted for sensitivity, you can have it pick up only:

**Very close signals.** Such as standing at the checkout counter prompting me to like the business on Facebook or sign up for their newsletter

**Mid-range signals (within a few meters).** When I'm in the fat tire section of the store

**Far away detection.** Like if I'm walking by the outside of the store or have just entered the front door.

This same capability can even be used in the conference example mentioned earlier, providing event organizers valuable information on which sessions people attend or which vendor booths get the most traffic.

For businesses that put beacon technology to work and get customer adoption, the possibility of re-creating the famous scene from the 2002 movie *Minority Report* may be closer to reality than you think. If you've not seen the movie (or maybe need a refresher – it was 13 years ago after all), Tom Cruise's character walks by a billboard and it magically recognizes him to quickly customize the marketing message. Just imagine if your customers could get this level of personalization when they enter your business. "Hey, Eric... that fat tire bike you've been looking at is on sale today! How about a test ride?" That might just be the message that I need to see to get me to say "I'll take it!"

## What About Security?

By now you may be thinking, “So I can use mobile devices to make payments, track personal health information and tell the world where I am even when GPS devices can’t see me... that’s a lot of personal information. How secure is all of this?” Good question and a very necessary one as petabytes of big data about us is being collected with very little effort on our part. The first step is to make sure that you have some sort of password or way to protect your device. Whether you require a fingerprint like with the iPhone or new Samsung devices, have to draw a pattern on the screen or are using a numerical PIN code to unlock your device, that’s the minimum first line of defense.

Not enough security for you? Well if you happen to live in China, you could give the new ZTE Grand S3 a try and unlock your phone with your eyeball. That’s right, this device is the first to offer retinal detection as a means to unlock the phone by using the unique pattern of blood vessels in the back of your eye as your “security code”. This ocular-based means of identity protection can also be found in iris detection services as well, which are starting to rely on a more advanced form of biometric identification than just a fingerprint.

With the initial discussion about mCommerce, it’s also worth noting some of the security steps being taken when it comes to protecting your financial information. With the number of data breaches and credit card numbers being stolen from merchants throughout the U.S. like Target, Home Depot, and others, consumers are becoming more aware of the risks associated with their digital transactions.

When we push the purchase capability to our mobile devices that opens up even more risk.

The good news is that services like Apple Pay and Google Wallet are using what's called "tokenization" as part of the payment process. At a very high level, this means that while your credit card information is being used as part of the transaction, it's not transmitted during the purchase process and remains safely behind the scenes. Through the cooperation with the bank, payment service, and the merchant, a one-time code, called a *token*, is created that authorizes the transaction. While the token may be stored at the merchant after the transaction is completed, if stolen it's useless and was only good for that one transaction. This makes the likelihood of a breach revealing customers' information significantly less, even eliminating it all together in most cases. Given that in the first three quarters of 2014 global payments and transaction startups raised a combined \$1.18 billion through 75 funding deals, it's evident the payment space realizes the importance of protecting the transaction and making mCommerce not just easier, but more secure.

### **What's Next?**

That's a good question. When it comes to the mobile device the marketing possibilities are limitless. Hopefully, this chapter has at least got you thinking about some of the ways that your business should be expanding its mobile strategy and leveraging some of these new mobile technology advances. First, ask yourself the questions - although it might be better to ask your customers:

- Are we easy to do business with on a mobile device?
- Can our customers find our information quickly?
- Can our customers make a purchase for our products or services online
- Are we even visible when someone goes to their mobile looking for what we do?

Also, think about some of the other mobile devices that go beyond the smartphone and if they would have a place in your overall mobile strategy. And finally, while mobile certainly is a big component of a digital strategy, consider how it fits with the other chapters in this book to provide a seamless and comfortable experience for your customers and prospects. It's now the number one device, so let's treat it that way and give it the attention (and budget) it deserves!



# 10

## EMAIL MARKETING: EVOLVING IN A SOCIAL WORLD

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*By Alison Lindemann*

While there is a myriad of ways individuals receive their information, email continues to be the tool used by nearly everyone. Consumers across the world use email to connect with their favorite brands and companies in order to get updates and save money with coupons and offers. Additionally, email marketing campaigns are an effective way to reach consumers on their mobile devices.

An email marketing campaign is versatile enough to provide direct information to your customer base while still being able to be integrated into other marketing efforts. By learning how to engage your customers through a well-developed email marketing campaign, you will continue

to grow your brand presence and begin to see an increase in conversions.

## **Doing It Right: Best Practices for Email Marketing**

Email marketing continues to be one of the most effective ways of connecting with your audience because it gives you substantial reach, flexibility, and full control of your messaging. However, many brands continue to misuse email marketing by holding onto the *email blast* mentality. Gone are the days of blasting a single message out to your entire database of contacts. In today's digital landscape, email marketing is all about creating targeted and useful content that your customers look forward to receiving.

### **Creating Killer Campaigns with Targeted Strategies**

One of the biggest mistakes made by marketing professionals is to send email communications to their customers without a plan. Building a campaign with strategies targeted for each of your customer segments can mean the difference between creating a conversion and finding your email in the trash bin.

To design a campaign for your specific brand, begin with a goal. Are you looking to build your email list? Are you trying to drive sales for a specific product or service? Do you want to build brand awareness with your potential customer base, so they know to turn to you when they are ready to buy? By understanding your goals, you can tailor

your campaign and know when you have successfully hit the mark.

Strategies for creating killer email marketing campaigns can be broken down into three categories – content, offers, and relationship building. Ideally, the perfect campaign will incorporate all of these.

## **Content**

Content has become a buzzword tossed around constantly, and because of its prevalence, many marketers have begun to forget *why* it is so important. Creating exceptional original content positions you as an expert in your industry and provides the opportunity for your customers to add value to their network by sharing your content. Simply put, great shareable content makes your customers look good to the colleagues, friends, and family within their network. Who doesn't love that?

While creating content is essential, it does little for brand development and driving sales if there is not a strategy in place to deliver the content in a way that gives your company a solid ROI. Sharing some of your content publicly gives your customers a taste of the valuable information you have created. Keeping the remainder of this information behind an *information wall* gives your brand the opportunity to capture essential information from, or interact with, an otherwise anonymous visitor. For the first interaction with this customer, acquiring their opt-in information, such as their name and email address, is key for your list building initiative. Opportunities continue to unfold with each additional request for access to your

content, and you can begin to look for deeper information insights or even social media shares.

## **Offers**

Offers can be a wildly effective way of providing value to the customer, but they also run the risk of coming across as overly “salesy.” By shifting your message away from a direct sales approach and embracing a helpful voice, you can become a trusted friend who is helping to solve a problem or address a void. Providing a strong value proposition gives your potential customers a solid reason to buy and leaves them thankful that you were able to provide the solution. With each conversion driven by your offer, you have the opportunity to glean additional insights into your customers’ needs.

## **Relationship Building**

Relationship building takes your email marketing campaign to the next level. Your brand has created original content that your customers are regularly sharing with their network. You have provided offers to drive sales conversions and attain customer opt-in information. Now, it is essential to learn more about your customer. By asking them to take a survey or provide additional information on their preferences and interests, you are communicating that you care about their needs. Additionally, by sharing information about your brand, you build a stronger emotional connection. Be a person, not a brand. Let your customers understand your values and communicate how your beliefs drive your brand. It is important to note, however, that by sharing your values and beliefs, you risk alienating those

with conflicting beliefs. Therefore, it may not be a good idea to share beliefs that are potentially controversial.

## **Giving Your Customers What They Want: Personalization and Customization**

The top reason consumers opt-out or unsubscribe from email lists is irrelevant messages. With the near constant flow of information consumers are fed each day, it's become even more essential to provide personalized and customized email messages for your customers. Consumers want to know that you are targeting them for a reason and that your product or service adds value to their current situation.

**Understand your customer by developing buyer personas.** Buyer personas are theoretical insights into the ideal customer for a brand, and these personas take into account the different types of customers to be targeted. Developing these personas provides insights into the customer and assists in segmenting your larger database. To develop each buyer persona, consider demographics, job level and seniority, daily life experiences, common life challenges, values, goals, where they acquire their information, and experience expectations.

To get a head start on developing your personas either consult Chapter 4 (on Content Marketing) of this book or download our guide, *How to Create Buyer Personas* at this link: [www.wsiworld.com/buyer-personas](http://www.wsiworld.com/buyer-personas).

**Consider how to identify each buyer persona.** Now that you understand each buyer persona, it is important

to consider how to identify each of them. Can their job title, income level, age, or specific interests identify them? By understanding how to efficiently identify each buyer persona, the marketing professional is able to ask the right questions in a concise way on opt-in forms. This way, as customers opt-in for your newsletter or email marketing campaign, you are able to place each individual into his or her appropriate segment list.

**A customer login provides the opportunity for more in-depth data points.** By prompting your customers to create an account prior to checking out or making an appointment, the company is able to acquire significant amounts of permission-based data. Consumers are often willing to provide additional information about their interests, habits, and preferences in exchange for being contacted, as long as they understand the goal is to provide them with relevant information. Just imagine the impact of a beauty company sending new fair complexion makeup offers solely to the women in their database with fair skin and blue or green eyes.

**Incorporate all accessible information into your marketing database.** All too often, marketing departments do not have continual interaction with other departments in the company. However, the sales department may have invaluable insights into the customer base. Many sales-based companies utilize customer relationship management (CRM) software to track and organize information on customers' buying habits and company interactions. Often, the CRM databases can be incorporated into the marketing database. By understanding whether the consumer contacted customer service or inquired about a specific

product, the marketing department is able to further customize their messaging to that customer.

**Craft personalized messages for each segmented list.**

The language you use and the offers you highlight will change for each segment. Ask yourself what is most important to each segment, and address those needs specifically.

**Use dynamic tags to further personalize the message.**

We have all received an email marketing communication with our names in it, and we're all aware that no one is manually inputting those names into each email. However, dynamic tags can be much richer and more useful than including someone's first name. Consider using dynamic tags for any of the information stored in your database. If the company's CRM system is integrated into your marketing database, you could send targeted emails thanking the customer for downloading a particular whitepaper or speaking with a specific agent in the customer service department.

## **Don't Alienate Your Mobile Readers: Tips & Tricks for Mobile-Friendly Campaigns**

These days, if something doesn't happen instantly and on-demand, it doesn't happen at all! In a survey conducted by Constant Contact, it was reported that 75% of smartphone owners are likely to delete emails that are not easily read on their mobile devices.<sup>11</sup> A huge portion of our population reads their emails from their smartphones or tablets.

However, many brands fail to cater to the on-the-go consumer with mobile-friendly email campaigns.

Here are some important tips for making your email campaign more compatible with mobile.

**Compose short and concise subject lines.** Less of the subject line gets displayed on a mobile device. Since your subject line is the headline of your email, keep it to 40 characters or less.

**Put the most important information up front.** Consumers are more likely to skim through your email while they are viewing it on a mobile device. Be sure they see the most important information. Put it up front and use sub-headlines to call out specific points.

**Use a single column template.** Most email marketing tools have responsive templates designed to work with mobile devices. However, sticking with a single column template helps with easy readability with all email clients.

**Enjoy the white space.** White space is a natural way to break up text, increase readability, and frame the content in your email. Use white space in your email to ensure it looks clean and uncluttered.

**Use larger fonts.** Readability is the most important element of a mobile-friendly email. Using larger fonts helps with readability on smaller screens. Remember, your customers are likely reading in a less than ideal situation while on the go.

**Incorporate a strong and clearly visible call to action.** There should be one clear call to action for mobile viewing. Remember that a finger has much less accuracy than a



mouse when clicking on a screen, so creating a large call to action button works best on mobile. Use an accent color to make it clearly visible. If you choose to use an image for the call to action, be sure you use clear ALT text, in case the image doesn't load. This ALT text should include direct language such as "Click Here."

**Optimize your imagery and use appropriate ALT text.**

A good rule of thumb for all email marketing campaigns is taking slow download speeds into account. This is especially important for mobile-friendly email campaigns. Use limited but valuable images to break up text and add visual appeal. Responsive coding will help with the size of your images if it is available to you. Otherwise, try shrinking the images by 50% and then compressing them at a slightly higher compression rate. Remember, not all email clients automatically download images from new sources, so using appropriate ALT text with your images is essential if you want your email to still make an impact in an instance when the images don't load.

**Have a clean hierarchy and design.** Using headlines, font sizes, and colored text, you can create a clear hierarchy for your email. Use this to walk the reader through your email and show them exactly how you want the information consumed.

**Don't forget to test your email on multiple devices.**

Anyone who has transitioned between their Outlook program and their Gmail account knows that each email client displays emails differently. The same goes for mobile devices. Be sure to test your email on multiple devices to ensure that it displays correctly. If you don't have access to

multiple devices, look for services that offer device testing for you.

**Lead your customer to mobile-friendly conversion sites.** If your mobile-friendly email is directing the customer to visit your website, then your website must also be mobile-friendly. Additionally, be sure your sales funnels are mobile-friendly if you are expecting a sales conversion. If it doesn't happen at that moment, it won't happen at all.

The most important elements of any email campaign are reader usability and readability. Ensuring your email is accessible by a large percentage of mobile readers is an essential step in increasing your click-through rates and customer following.

## **Lead Nurturing and Marketing Automation: Building Relationships Before You Make a Sale**

Lead nurturing is a marketing term for building relationships with potential customers prior to actually selling your product or service to them. The truth of the matter is that nearly 80% of sales leads are not ready to make a purchase. By systematically providing a non-intrusive flow of information to the visitor, you are more likely to convert them into a customer.

Lead nurturing takes many forms, but it is all based around the concept that potential customers need varying types of information at different stages of the sales cycle. Tracking your potential customers' progress through the sales cycle allows you to address each of their needs at the

exact right time. Through a lead nurturing email campaign, email messages are sent to segmented lists of potential customers, providing a steady, but not overwhelming, amount of information based upon persona, demographics and interest in specific products or services.

Incorporating marketing automation software tracks the visitor's movements on your website to give you valuable insight into their interests. For example, if a person looks at a specific smartphone on your eCommerce website without making a purchase, your marketing automation software would allow you to send a follow-up email with similar phone options or perhaps accessories compatible with that phone.

Lead nurturing can be incredibly valuable for small and large businesses alike. How often are leads lost due to lack of information and follow-up? Additionally, how much time and energy is spent on leads that are highly unlikely to convert to a sale?

## **Segmentation and Micro-Targeting: Speaking With Your Intended Audience**

The more you know about your customers, the better equipped you are to provide them with targeted offers, product suggestions, and relevant content. Segmenting your database into more specific groupings of individuals is an essential element to any campaign. Micro-targeting takes it one step further to create smaller, more personal segments.

As you organize your database and integrate it with CRM systems, you will see the wealth of knowledge you have for each of your prospects and customers. You will

see which products they've shown interest in. You may see the social media channels they have used to follow your company. You can glean information based upon the category of blog posts they read most on your site. That meta-data becomes incredibly valuable in finely tuning messages tailored specifically for the individual.

Segmenting marketing database lists has been known to add value for years. However, many brands are just beginning to incorporate segmentation into their marketing plans. Now, the ability to micro-target your audience is growing in leaps and bounds. Whether your brand is segmenting your database into sub-lists of similar characteristics or micro-targeting each individual site visitor, tailoring messages to address the needs of your specific audience is an essential step in growing your reach and creating sales conversions.

## **A/B Split Testing: Knowing What Works for Your Audience**

Not all tactics work for all audiences. Most email marketing tools now offer the ability to do A/B split testing to learn about your audience's specific interests. In the simplest terms, an A/B split test is running two similar versions of an email campaign to see which performs better.

Running an A/B split test is only effective if there is one changed variable. For instance, using different wording within the subject line of your email while keeping the exact same body provides you insight into how your target audience responds to your subject line wording. Similarly, including the exact same information within the email, but

presenting it in two varying designs can give you insight into the preferred layout for your customers.

As email marketing tools continue to grow in their capabilities, it's important to make the most out of the services they provide. Utilizing the A/B split testing is one of the easiest and often overlooked ways of learning what works for your specific audience.

## **Enhancing the Email Experience**

As marketers continue to seek ways to stand out among their competitors and better address the preferences of their audience, many are adding tactics such as animated graphics, real-time email marketing, and location-specific email marketing.

### **Creating Movement with Animated Graphics**

Since most email clients do not support video in their email systems, animated graphics have become an essential way for marketers to create movement within their email campaigns. Animated GIFs work like a mini slideshow, creating video-like movement when done well. While they have long been used to create humorous tidbits, brands are now leveraging these sorts of dynamic images to add value to their email campaigns. For instance, MailChimp made use of an animated GIF when explaining substantial program changes in their newsletter. Instead of simply being eye-catching, the image provided a visual explanation of how to use the newly designed features of the program.

Similarly, for brands that have video-heavy presences on their websites or on platforms like YouTube, creating a teaser animated GIF is a great way to direct your email database to your highlighted video.

## **Real-Time Email Marketing**

Real-time email marketing is designed to instill a sense of urgency in the reader. Limited time offers and short-term sales often work to drive readers to the website, but there are some important points to consider before adding real-time email marketing to your campaign.

**Know your audience's timeline.** If your audience is made up of the type of user that checks their email religiously, real-time offers work well. However, if a good portion of your audience will receive the offer after it has expired, it will only frustrate them.

**Be mobile-friendly.** If you are creating a sense of urgency for your readers, be sure that your website and sales funnel can accommodate their orders while they are on the go.

**Be transparent.** Especially when working with tech or marketing savvy audiences, be aware that your customers may see your limited time offer as a ploy. Tie your real-time offers in with something to make it relevant, such as a countdown to Christmas or the arrival of a new fall shipment.

## **Location-Specific Email Marketing**

Many brands are beginning to recognize that offers and personalized emails based upon the individual's location are becoming more and more important to consumers on the go. In fact, Millennials have come to expect it! With the introduction of social check-ins, the online and offline worlds collided. When your users opt-in for location-based service programs, they are inviting you to interact with them.

While it is debated whether SMS text messages or email messages are more appropriate, most users will welcome a targeted offer or coupon sent in real-time while they are interacting with your brand.

## **List Building for Effective Email Marketing Campaigns**

Your database is your key to communicating with current and prospective customers. Whether they have made a purchase or not, these are the people who are interested in the products or services you have to offer. As long as you respect their time and provide useful information, they want to hear from you.

Maintaining and building your contact list is essential for effective email marketing. Further, developing a clean database allows you to build campaigns that are personalized and incorporate dynamic tags.

## **Building Your List: Tactics for Growing Your Contact Database**

Lists do not magically appear overnight. Yes, lists can be bought, but the most worthwhile lists are the ones you systematically develop by inviting individuals who are interacting with your brand to sign-up for your emails and share your valuable information.

The number one thing to keep in mind while creating your list building strategy is to make it ridiculously easy to sign up. By providing multiple, clear opportunities to sign up for your email list, you are increasing the likelihood that you will have a new contact.

Most marketers are aware that the sign-up module should appear in multiple places on the page, including the top of the sidebar and the footer, but there are some additional options that are often overlooked.

*Feature Boxes:* These work like a header and splash your brand across the top of the page. When someone lands on your page, they are immediately presented with the opportunity to sign up for your email campaigns.

*Lightbox Pop-Ups:* These can provide overwhelming results when building your list. Before you cringe, take this into consideration: from 2011 – 2013, Social Media Examiner grew their email list 375% to 190,000 followers, and CEO Michael Stelzner attributes that growth to the pop-up page. Remember, with customizable options now available for the pop-up boxes, you have unprecedented control. Perhaps the pop-up box doesn't appear until your visitor has spent two minutes on the page. Additionally, you can disable the pop-up box for mobile users.



*Slideup Boxes:* These are a less intrusive option for those who have found that the pop-up sign up box does not work for their audience. Sliding in from the bottom corner of the page, these boxes are also a very effective way to build your email database.

*After Each Blog Post:* Readers should have the ability to sign-up to receive more information from your brand. If readers make it to the end of your post, it means they clearly like the content you're offering.

*A Hello or Viper Bar:* This is a thin bar at the top of the page that has a specific call to action. Using this plugin to highlight your sign-up ensures your visitors are aware that you have more information to send them.

## **Using Social to Grow Your List**

You have interaction with your customers on your social media accounts, so why not leverage these followers and convert them into email campaign recipients?

By creating a landing page for your email sign-up, you are able to easily leverage social media posts with invitations to gain additional information. Preview some of your exceptional content on your social media channels and invite your followers to learn more. The links can lead to gated information, which requires an opt-in to view.

Incentives, special offers, giveaways, and sweepstakes are also very effective ways of getting your social media followers to sign up for your email list. Additionally, Facebook makes it especially easy to incorporate a sign-up tab on your Facebook page. Look to see whether your email client has a Facebook app already created.

## **Legal Issues and Considerations**

Countries across the world are continually adopting and developing their laws surrounding email campaigns and spam. In the United States, the CAN-SPAM Act of 2003 made it illegal to make false claims in the subject lines of email marketing messages. Additionally, it introduced the concept of requiring companies to provide the ability to opt-out of unwanted emails.

Today, email marketers are required to follow guidelines that protect the consumer. In addition to not being allowed to include misleading headings or subject lines and requiring clearly visible opt-out options, marketing emails are required to be marked as an advertisement and have a physical address associated with the company.

On July 1, 2014, Canada's Anti-Spam Legislation (CASL) came into effect. CASL requires either implied or expressed consent by the recipient in order to receive email marketing messages. This hierarchy of consent is rather new to the email marketing world. Implied consent includes having made an inquiry, purchased a product or service, or became a member in some way or another. Implied consent allows a company to email the consumer for 6-24 months, depending on several factors surrounding the consent. If implied consent is not given, then the company must have documented expressed consent, or a direct sign-up, in order to email the consumer.

While CASL carries heavier fines than CAN-SPAM, breaking the laws surrounding spam can be incredibly costly to companies.

## **Begin Your Email Campaign Today**

As email continues to evolve, brands are able to leverage new technologies to integrate their email campaigns into the lives of their customers. Begin by identifying your goals, understanding your target audience, and developing your mailing list.

If you're new to email marketing, start researching the many email campaign tools available, such as Constant Contact and MailChimp. These user-friendly tools will help guide you through the design process of your campaign. Additionally, many of these tools have editorials to educate you on how to best use the program.

Targeting your email campaign to address the needs of your customer (and potential customer) base will boost your conversions and get you closer to your goals. Remember, at the end of the day, email marketing is about connecting with your audience and providing them with a more enriched overall customer experience.



# 11

## **MARKETING AUTOMATION: DREAM OR REALITY?**

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*By Michael Watkins and Nicole Dupre*

If you're a business owner or marketing director, the thought of a steady flow of qualified leads coming to your sales team on a daily, monthly, and yearly basis is, quite frankly, the stuff dreams are made of. It's the Holy Grail of marketing, the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, the hidden treasure found through a journey marred with twists and turns that only Johnny Depp could appreciate. After all, the potential of creating a constant flow of leads with virtually zero effort means more time with family, better golf scores, and the bliss of knowing your company's sales and profits are destined to grow forever.

## **Dream or Reality?**

This magnificent bounty is called marketing automation. Ever heard of it? Sounds as if it's as easy as switching your marketing controls to autopilot and letting the leads flow in! The truth is, *it is a reality* though not exactly in the "sit back and relax" sense. The other truth is, *it's not the easiest to achieve*, and will remain a dream if proper steps are not taken. It can be difficult to accomplish because contrary to the word automation, it's far from an automatic process when designing and executing the plan. It involves laser focus, deep customer knowledge, relentless testing and the optimization of communication channels delivering the best results. For a company willing to make the commitment, marketing automation can be a sweet reality yielding dreamy returns.

## **What Is Marketing Automation?**

The term marketing automation refers to technology designed to effectively market through multiple digital channels (such as email, social media, websites, etc.) and automate marketing processes using customer segmentation, customer data integration, and campaign management. It allows companies to connect multiple touch points while nurturing and converting potential customers to customers and customers to delighted promoters.

Marketing automation by definition may seem kind of cold and impersonal, and maybe even a little spammy. To the contrary, it's a highly personalized process of collecting important data on a potential customer's interests

and goals, allowing a business to deliver specific, custom-tailored offers that resonate and delight. A successful marketing automation campaign creates unparalleled customer satisfaction and loyalty. No other form of marketing could be more personal.

## **Is Marketing Automation Right For You?**

So, who uses marketing automation? Larger companies started using the technology as far back as the late 1990s, but now the fastest growing segment in marketing automation software adoption is small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs are companies generating revenue between \$5,000,000 and \$500,000,000).

Early adopters were primarily business-to-business firms in industries such as manufacturing, high-tech software and business services. Only in the last few years have all categories of business adopted marketing automation for its relationship-oriented approach to directing potential customers through the buying funnel.

Most industry experts agree the boom in marketing automation is the result of new providers offering solutions through software as a service (SaaS) where marketers can manage tools in a browser rather than accessing a technology that often requires IT support. Since the technology is sold on a subscription basis, the investment is typically lower and comes from operating budgets rather than capital investments.

## **Is it Different Than Email Marketing?**

There is a lot of confusion between email marketing and marketing automation since email is one of the most common methods used to engage customers. Is it simply a more sophisticated method of sending personalized emails asking potential customers to visit landing pages and download offers? Actually, it's much more than that. It's a fully integrated solution using email marketing, landing pages, campaign management, lead scoring, social media tools, CRM integration and analytics. It utilizes each of these tools to ensure every touch point is managed to create optimal customer conversions.

Email is only one channel of customer communication. Marketing automation dynamically delivers relevant content based on specific profiles, behaviors, and demographics. It further enables a marketer to test messages across multiple communication channels to drive engagement and segment potential customers based on their website and media usage patterns.

Marketing automation also allows for closed-loop reporting. When integrated into a CRM system, it allows a company to track and analyze leads through the entire sales process, giving an insightful view to the combined methods that bring the highest ROI.

## **How Does Marketing Automation Work?**

Marketing automation uses technology to guide potential customers through a buying funnel. Rather than sending an individual message to someone interested in your product,



a series of messages, and other engagements are delivered to educate, inform, qualify, and close a potential customer. The close may occur during the automation process, or once a potential customer is convinced of the product's value; either way, they are directed to a sales representative as a qualified lead, ready to complete the order.

A simple marketing automation process looks like this:

*Step 1:* You visit a website, blog, or social media post with an invitation to download a free guide.

*Step 2:* To download the guide, you must fill out a short form with your name and email address.

*Step 3:* You receive a thank you message once you've downloaded the guide with an invitation to read a related guide that offers even more detail about the solution or a case study from another customer with a similar problem to solve. To gain access to this offer, you fill out another short form that asks more detail about your company size and your role in the company.

*Step 4:* Once you receive this additional content, a sales representative from the company receives an alert that you've taken this next step and contacts you for further assistance to complete a sale.

The automation process can be as simple as two or three steps, or depending upon the complexity of the product or service, a series of five or more steps are necessary to pull a potential customer through the entire sales funnel. The most effective campaigns consist of stages of personalized messages exhibiting a high-touch customer service approach.

## What Are the Benefits of Marketing Automation?

Marketing automation is really about optimization. Here are some of its significant advantages to businesses focused on growth.

**It Saves Time.** Time is one of the most precious resources in any business. By automating a marketing campaign, a potential customer is taken step-by-step through the buying cycle and can choose to engage with a sales person at any step of the process. Instead of managing each individual communication point, an automated workflow is set in motion according to the choices a potential customer makes as they are moving through the cycle, delivering appropriate messages and nurturing leads closer to a purchase.

**It Delivers Leads.** For the sales team, marketing automation ensures that leads have immediate access to all information helping them get closer to a buying decision, in a deliberate order, so when they choose to engage with a sales rep, they are ready to buy. Lead intelligence gathered as the potential customer moves through the automated steps allows the rep to score the lead and focus on the hottest leads first while avoiding the weak leads that often take more time.

While marketing automation saves time, it also keeps weak leads in the sales funnel and notifies the sales team when they get closer to a buying decision. By comparison, email marketing will disengage with potential customers that don't respond to a number of emails without the opportunity to further interact and nurture.

**It Generates High Revenues.** Because automation tracks customers through the sales funnel and records interactions through a series of metrics in each campaign, a company is able to maximize the efforts that generate the highest revenue and minimize the ones that don't produce. Higher revenues can also be achieved by automating cross-sells, up-sells, and customer follow-ups.

When combining the most successful campaign methods and prioritizing the most qualified leads, an organization will rapidly produce a better ROI.

**Marketing Automation Creates Valuable Buyer Personas.** One of the biggest advantages to marketing automation is developing a deeper understanding of your customers through a compilation of engagement profiles across all customer touch points. Automation allows you to build a database of website visits, blog visits, social media site visits, email opens, whitepaper downloads, form submissions, surveys and sales contacts.

This one-to-one relationship enables a company to learn more about their potential customers and customers, arming them with invaluable data for future marketing campaigns and, more importantly, the development of buyer personas. Get a head start on developing your personas by downloading our guide, *How to Create Buyer Personas* at this link: [www.wsiworld.com/buyer-personas](http://www.wsiworld.com/buyer-personas).

## **The Steps to Marketing Automation Success**

Marketing automation is an incredible technology tool. Of course, it's just software. The true value to a customer

is how that software is used to create more business. A dedicated strategy based on a customer's needs and a solid system of meeting those needs with personalized content is essential to success.

**1. Set very specific goals.** The first step leading to a successful marketing automation plan is to set very specific goals. How many qualified leads do we need? How much website traffic needs to be generated to get to those leads? In most cases, the desired number of leads is targeted and the metrics required to achieve them are backed out and set up as first line goals.

For example, if you need 50 qualified leads per month, then you may target 12,500 visitors to visit a landing page with 20% of those visitors accepting an offer on your landing page, and then 2% of those visitors turning into a lead.

- 12,500 visitors
- 20% accept offers = 2,500
- 2% contacted as leads = 50

**2. Create remarkable content that your potential customers want to read.** Relevant content marketing is essential to success in marketing automation. The content must appeal to the characteristics of each potential customer and answer questions dedicated to showing how a product or service will effectively solve their problem. Creating buyer personas of your ideal customers is critical to ensuring the right content is matched to the right person (see Chapter 4 for more information on buyer personas)

**3. Create accountability between marketing and sales departments.**

The analytics available in marketing automation allow marketing and sales departments to strategically improve their processes, and in turn, hold each other accountable. As leads are produced through automation and a clear path is established through the buying cycle, it becomes evident whether a lead had a proper follow-up to close the sale. By the same token, sales departments can view the metrics involved in developing qualified leads and see when and where marketing may be falling short. Cooperation between both marketing and sales teams will drive sales to unprecedented levels.

**4. Establish a definitive closed-loop reporting process.**

Using a closed-loop reporting process, you are able to tie the sequence of steps delivering potential customers through the buying cycle to the point of recording the actual sale. In the end, marketing analytics reports will establish customer profiles in which every engagement that leads to a sale is recorded, in addition to following the interactions that turn customers into promoters. The easiest way to accomplish closed-loop reporting is with CRM integration where each sale is linked back to customer interactions automatically. If a CRM integration is not available, then most platforms accommodate manual additions of sales transactions to complete the loop. Closed-loop reporting is vital to leading to improvements in both marketing and sales tactics.

**5. Test, test, test, and then test again.**

The beauty of marketing automation is that marketers receive a constant flow of data to assist them in optimizing results. All aspects of marketing can be reviewed with A/B testing. Landing pages, calls-to-action, offers, blog and social media posts

and website pages can all be evaluated and fine-tuned to produce the best results possible. Testing is a never-ending component in marketing automation, and those who practice it consistently yield the strongest competitive advantage.

## **What Is Advanced Marketing Automation?**

Of course marketing automation campaigns can be effective in the most basic to the most highly advanced plans. Contact lists can be segmented into hundreds of categories each with a series of specific messages to be delivered and a definitive workflow to move through. High-level marketing automation is often required for more complex products with steep average dollar investments. The most advanced level of marketing automation links advanced analytics to turn business data into customer intelligence in real-time. It optimizes each customer contact by micro-tailoring promotions and offers that exceed expectations. Advanced automation also enables more opportunistic marketing than ever by responding to triggers that indicate a change in a customer's state—did they just move, make a purchase without add-ons, make a comment about a competitor, or purchase a newly introduced line for the first time?

Advanced marketing automation is bound by the highest level of personalization and customer knowledge achievable but rewarded with an increasing rate of return through long-term loyalty and relationship building.

Alas, marketing automation is not a button to push that immediately drives leads to your door as you take that extra-long daily nap or add another one or two golf

rounds to your week. It is, however, a reward worthy of high pursuit.

There are several marketing automation platforms available. The most notable are HubSpot, Infusionsoft, Eloqua, Marketo, Pardot, and Act-on, just to name a few. No matter how sophisticated the software, proper implementation is the key to success.

Make sure you are aligned with a team of professional digital marketers not only proficient with the software you choose, but who also make a commitment to constantly learn more about your customers, create value through each step of the sales funnel, set precise goals that meet your growth needs and execute a high-touch methodology that delivers new customers.

That commitment will make marketing automation for your business a superb reality.





# 12

## ANALYTICS: THE ROLE OF DATA IN DIGITAL MARKETING

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*By Chris Leone*

John Wanamaker, a pioneer of modern advertising, famously stated, “Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is I don’t know which half.” With nearly \$200 billion in media spend per year in just the United States, that’s a lot of wasted money (according to Wanamaker’s estimations).

If this is true, being able to understand which marketing channels are effective not only brings huge cost-saving implications, it becomes a major competitive advantage. Web analytics is a cornerstone of that reality.

The following is an introduction to web analytics, why you should care about it, how it can be applied to your marketing and how it's evolving.

## **What It Is and What It Can Do For You**

Web analytics tools collect and report data on how people interact with your website. Most web analytics software gives you access to hundreds of standard reports, metrics, and dimensions right out of the box. You learn which marketing channels send people to your website, where they land, where they go and how long they spend on your website.

### **Why Businesses Should Care**

Web analytics helps businesses make smarter, more informed decisions about their marketing and web presence. This data can be used to improve the user experience, increase the rate at which customers purchase or drive some other online or offline action.

### **What It Cannot Do**

Web analytics tools will not interpret your data, derive insight, or make decisions on your behalf. The function of a web analytics tool is to report what is happening. It's your job (or your consultant's job) to make sense of the data and make actionable insights.

## Accuracy of Data

Quality data is critical, but quality does not mean perfect. No analytics tool, paid or free, will give you perfect data. But that's okay! You're not after perfection, you're after *precision*.

**Strive for precision, not accuracy.** Ideally, your data is both precise and accurate. But in the world of web analytics, your data will never be 100% accurate. Therefore, you should strive for precision, or consistency with your data. This means while your analytics tool is never 100% accurate, it is always collecting and reporting data the same way.

**Allow for a 10% margin of error.** As a general rule, you should allow up to a 10% variance between different analytics tools. Anything higher than 10% should be investigated.

**Perform regular, simple audits.** Every few months, you should compare your web analytics' reported conversions with the website leads that hit your inbox or your eCommerce platform sales report (both of which represent actual numbers). If you use Google Analytics, use a free scanning tool (such as GA Checker) to crawl your website and confirm a tracking code is detected on every page.

**Why a visitor would be omitted from tracking.** A user could be omitted from tracking for several reasons, including, but not limited to:

- They have opted out of web analytics tracking
- They have JavaScript disabled on their browser (most web analytics tools rely on JavaScript to execute their tracking)

- They do not have cookies enabled on their browser

## Metrics That Matter

The most important metrics are the ones that tie closely back to business results. This means metrics that relate as closely to revenue generation as possible, such as:

*Macro conversions:* Macro conversions represent the main action you want your websites visitors to take. If you are like most business websites in the world, that one thing is to generate leads and sales. Contact form submissions, phone calls, and online sales are common macro conversions.

*Micro conversions:* Micro conversions are the less significant actions a visitor takes, but they imply heightened interest. Because most visitors (over 90%) will not complete a macro conversion on your site, you will need additional ways to measure marketing impact.

To determine your website's micro conversions, consider the actions a user takes earlier in the buying funnel as they become informed and research their options.

Example of micro-goals could include the following:

- Whitepaper download
- Signing up for a newsletter
- Watching a promotional video
- Commenting on your blog

*Cost-per-conversion:* Also known as cost-per-lead or cost-per-acquisition, cost-per-conversion is the direct cost divided by the number of conversions generated. For

example, if you spend \$100 to generate two lead form submissions, your cost per conversion is \$50.

By understanding how each channel compares in terms of cost-per-conversion, you can decide where to further invest your budget (hint: spend it on the cheapest channels!). This metric is not available by default in your web analytics, so you will have to calculate it manually.

*Conversion rate:* Conversion rate reports the percentage of traffic that converts successfully on your website. It is calculated by dividing the number of conversions by the number of total visits. For example, if your website gets 4 conversions from 100 visits, the conversion rate is 4%. This metric is a strong indication of traffic quality and is available within most web analytics platforms after some very basic setup.

This isn't to say all other metrics should be totally ignored. Metrics such as time on site, pages per visit, and exit rate are small indicators that help you make decisions in the management of a campaign. But to a business owner, these metrics are meaningless to the top-line. Marketing is about generating more business, so your key metrics should reflect that!

## **Creating Your Scoreboard**

Your analytics scoreboard (or dashboard) represents a high-level report of activity, behavior and impact, reported on a single page. It is both informative and actionable, providing end-to-end insight on the input of activity and the

resulting outcomes. It should calculate the actual business impact of all activity and marketing investments.

When possible, your website metrics should be reported in the context of pre-defined goals and competitive benchmarks. Showing how your macro and micro goals compare against your original plan gives performance context that can drive action.

An effective dashboard should also contain qualitative analysis of the reported metrics. As a practitioner, it's your job to assess the numbers and provide recommendations. As a manager or executive, you should lean on your specialists for an interpretation of the data.

Because some of these components require manual calculation and interpretation, they can't be automated within your web analytics software. Most software includes a dashboard-type feature, but because they focus entirely on quantitative information, you should limit their use.

## **Other Useful Reports**

### **Landing Page Report**

It's common to treat your homepage like your home's front door. Your front door gets all the nice landscaping, potted plants and window decorations. You want visitors to have a strong first impression when they enter your home, so you invest your time accordingly.

Similarly, you may treat your website's homepage as the first page a visitor sees during their visit. You invest the most design time on this one page, treating internal pages almost as an afterthought. In reality, it's not uncommon

for only 1 in 5 visitors to start their visit on the homepage. Which means, every page of your website is a potential front door!

The landing page report lists the pages visitors use to enter your website. Bounce rate (the percentage of visitors who left after only viewing one page) and conversion rate (the percentage of traffic that converts after entering from this page) are strong indicators of the type of first impression these pages give your site visitors.

### **Site Search Report**

One of the most undervalued reports in terms of deriving user intent, a site search report shows what users are seeking once they arrive on your site (this requires having site search functionality on your site).

With most web analytics reports, you are inferring what the user wants based on their behavior. But with the site search report, users are explicitly telling you what they want! In addition, the fact that they searched implies potential usability and navigation hurdles (because they couldn't find what they were looking for).

You can use the site search report to improve navigation structure, enhance messaging and discover opportunities for new products and services.

### **Pop-Up Surveys**

Although not a feature in most web analytics software, onsite surveys are an excellent method of obtaining qualitative data that can be used to drive quantitative analysis.

Pop-up surveys should be short and sweet, asking only one or two simple questions. This makes the effort of

answering the survey comparable to the effort of declining the survey. This ensures higher response rates and quicker insight!

Here are some survey questions we've found to deliver powerful insight:

- *Have you used our services before?* This tells you what percentage of traffic is an existing customer versus a potential customer.
- *How can we improve this page?* Users will give you simple ideas for improving your website pages.
- *Are you planning to make a decision today?* The percentage of users who answer yes versus the percentage that actually convert are usually different. The gap between the two is what you should attempt to solve with conversion rate optimization.
- *What is the purpose of your visit today?* This multiple choice question can bring greater insight to the makeup of your traffic and whether your website messaging is aligned accordingly.

## **Mobile Overview**

This report breaks down the percentage of site traffic by device (desktop/laptop, tablet, smartphone), in addition to how each segment behaves (e.g. bounce rate, conversion rate).

Visitors coming from a mobile device behave differently from desktop visitors. They are on-the-go, using their fingers to navigate and confined to a small screen. A mobile overview report will prove how different mobile users



interact with your website compared to desktop visitors (responsive websites notwithstanding).

As the percentage of mobile visitors on your site increases, the attention you put towards enhancing the mobile experience should increase as well.

## **Accounting for the Multi-Device Challenge**

Customers use a combination of devices and channels to consume and react to a marketing message. For example, a customer could find you on social media from their smartphone, visit your website on their work computer, then purchase through their personal laptop.

Web analytics software traditionally uses cookies to connect multiple visits with a single user. Because cookies are set to the browser (e.g. Chrome, Internet Explorer, or Safari), it cannot “see” a user move across different devices.

This presents a serious tracking challenge and attribution challenge with no perfect solution.

Google Analytics’ Universal Analytics tracking code offers one option. With proper configuration, you can associate a unique user ID with a customer’s login information. While the data will remain anonymous in your reports, it connects the user’s sessions as they move across different devices, provided they are logged in on each device.

Of course, not every website requires users to log in. Or if they do, membership doesn’t happen immediately.

With 90% of consumers utilizing a combination of Internet devices to accomplish a task, marketers must think more deeply about the path a user takes leading up to a sale, and how to distribute conversion credit (ROI)

across those channels (even if it requires making some general assumptions).

## Multi-Channel Attribution Challenge

Just as consumers use a combination of devices to receive and respond to marketing messages, they use a combination of channels to find and interact with your website prior to purchase.

Here's an example. If a customer initially finds your website through paid search (PPC), then returns through social media, and finally through email marketing to make a purchase, which channel gets the credit for the sale?

Historically, we would associate a conversion with the last channel someone used to get to the site before purchasing. In this case, email marketing would get credit for the conversion. But what about paid search? After all, this channel made the initial introduction between the customer and your brand. Doesn't it deserve at least *some* credit? And if so, how much?

This is called the multi-channel attribution challenge. And unlike the multi-device challenge, there is a good solution.

Google Analytics' Multi-Channel Funnels report visualizes the various conversion paths a visitor uses to find and ultimately convert, on your site. If a channel was part of the conversion path but was not the final channel used before converting, it gets credit for an "assisted conversion." When a channel is the last means someone used before converting on your site, it gets credit for a "last click conversion."

It's up to you how you disperse credit (i.e. conversion value) throughout the various conversion channels. You can give credit to the first channel used to find your site, the last channel used prior conversion, all channels evenly, or come up with your own formula.

## **A/B Testing: Increasing Sales Without Increasing Traffic**

There are two ways to increase sales from your website. You can:

- Increase the amount of traffic, or
- Increase the rate at which that traffic purchases or converts.

We tend to obsess over new traffic acquisition, but often overlook how we can increase the rate at which that traffic converts. Consider this: you could double your sales without increasing traffic by a single visitor. How? Double your conversion rate. If all you did was find a way to take your conversion rate from 1% to 2%, your sales would double.

The approach to improving your conversion rate should follow these three steps:

**Identify a high volume, high impact page on your website.** This is an important first step and sets the stage for how impactful your test will be. High volume pages or pages that play a necessary step in the conversion path should be prioritized.

**Determine how it can be improved.** Resist the urge to test button colors or page design. To effectively improve your conversion rate, you need to deeply understand your user, what's important to them and why they buy. Remember: conversion rate optimization is a psychological challenge much more than a design challenge.

**Test it!** To determine if a new page variation truly outperforms the original, run an A/B test between the two. An A/B will send a percentage of traffic to each page, then report back on which page was more effective at achieving a particular outcome. Most A/B testing tools will automatically perform the statistical analysis to identify an experiment winner.

## **Beyond Your Website: Tracking Your Digital Ecosystem**

Customers gather information about your brand in places other than your website. Therefore, if you want to truly understand and optimize the online customer experience, you need to track and measure activity in places beyond your website. I call this the digital marketing ecosystem.

To develop a measurement framework for your digital ecosystem, you must establish the Three P's: properties, path, and purpose.

*1. Properties:* Properties represent the places a consumer can research your brand or offering in the digital world. This could include your website, mobile app, social media profile or consumer review site. Some of these properties

are controlled entirely by you (your website), partially by you (a social media profile) or by someone else (a consumer review website).

2. *Path:* Next, determine the role these properties play in the path leading to conversion. For example, what properties do you expect users to see first? Where do they go, and what do they do when they're close to making a decision? Once they become a customer, what is their digital experience with your brand in the first 30 days?

3. *Purpose:* Finally, establish why these properties exist. Identify their purpose for the user and the two or three metrics that indicate success. If your website is meant to convert visitors into customers, track leads and sales. If a reviews website is a third party endorsement (or deterrent) for your brand, track the ratio of positive to negative reviews.

## **What Businesses Get Wrong When Utilizing Web Analytics**

*Inferring too much from too little:* Marketers overvalue the wealth of data available in their web analytics tools. In reality, most of the data is not actionable, therefore worthless. It's your mission to identify the metrics that truly matter, then focus your energy and actions accordingly.

*Lack of segmentation:* Visitors come to your website in a variety of ways, for different reasons, and in different stages of the buying funnel. Therefore, you should never

look at your site visitors in one giant bucket. Instead, segment visitors by source, behavior, and activity.

*Beginning with data, instead of the goal:* Web analytics software is a tool for helping you make smarter, more informed decisions. If you don't know upfront what you are trying to solve for, and instead dive headfirst into the data, you won't stay focused on answering the most important questions.

As a general rule, write down the specific questions you want to answer before opening your web analytics tool.

*Lack of qualitative data:* Some of the greatest insights about your users can be derived through qualitative analysis. Open-ended surveys and usability tests are inexpensive methods for understanding the user's mindset, and can provide deeper context to your quantitative data.

With the ultimate goal of better understanding how to serve the customer online, you must remain open to every available method for obtaining actionable insight.

## **A Few Words on Privacy**

Web analytics provides tremendous opportunities to marketers and businesses for optimizing their campaigns. Alongside those opportunities are legitimate privacy concerns. It's worth taking a minute to understand the basics of Internet privacy, how visitors are tracked and how governments are involved. In no way do I intend to oversimplify a very complex topic, so I encourage you to reference local legislation on the topic.

The Internet privacy debate is primarily centered on tracking cookies. A cookie is a small piece of anonymous data a website sets in your browser as a means to connect site activity with a particular user.

First-party cookies are the most common and considered the safest in terms of privacy. This means they will not share the user data they collect. Google Analytics relies primarily on 1st party cookies, making it the most widely implemented analytics software.

Third-party cookies go a step further by allowing other websites to access the cookie information and collect or store additional information, such as where a user has been and what they've done. This makes third party cookies less safe for the user and a bigger target for government regulation.

Your web analytics software may use either first or third party cookies. Due to increased privacy concerns, third-party cookie rejection is increasing. Therefore, you should limit your reliance on third party cookie tracking.

The laws governing Internet privacy, as it pertains to tracking visitors, are defined in part by the types of cookies allowed to track visitors and how the information can be used. Make sure you understand the conditions of your local legislation before implementing any type of web analytics tracking.

## **Happy Analyzing!**

As you embrace a data-driven approach to marketing, your predictions will sometimes be challenged, leaving your ego battered and bruised. Other times, they will support what

you've known all along, but could never prove. In the end, you'll walk away delighted by analytics software. You are now making your decisions based on fact, not faith. The numbers support your decisions, and no reasonable person can challenge you otherwise.



**CONCLUSION:**  
**TECHNOLOGY OF THE FUTURE**

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*By Dan Monaghan*

If you're like most people reading this book, you didn't grow up with tablets, smartphones, and social media. Chances are you've been shocked, confused and enamored by the rapid evolution of the digital world. But guess what? The last five years were *just the beginning*.

Ray Kurzweil, world-renowned futurist and director of engineering at Google, has said, “**The Internet will change more in the next 5 years than it has in the last 25 years combined.**” This kind of accelerated development is hard to fathom, especially if you're in awe of how far digital technology has come in the last 25 years.

In 1990, Kurzweil predicted a computer would beat a human at chess by 1998. His prediction came true in 1997 when Deep Blue beat Garry Kasparov. He also correctly claimed that by 2010, computers would be able to answer

queries via a wireless connection to the Internet. So the man knows a little bit about artificial intelligence.

To give you an idea of how Kurzweil views the advancement of technology, he believes we'll be able to upload our minds to computers by the year 2045. In theory, this would equate to humanity achieving The Singularity (the point at which we're able to transcend our biological limitations).

So why am I referencing a guy who makes abstract predictions about artificial intelligence and advanced technology in a digital marketing book?

The answer is simple: I want you to understand how fast the digital world moves. Talking about uploading a human consciousness to a computer seems outrageous, except for the fact it's potentially only 30 years away. In the grand scheme of technological breakthroughs, 30 years isn't a long time.

To go from where we currently are as a society to having a non-zero chance of becoming an immortal being is unthinkable. And yet one of the greatest prognosticators of our time is predicting we will achieve The Singularity in the next half-century.

What I'm trying to convey is if technology and the digital space are moving at the speed Ray Kurzweil suggests, then your business needs to adapt and react at the same pace. If you don't, you not only risk getting left behind, but being completely overrun by more advanced and informed companies.

## The Internet of Things

The Internet of Things (IoT) is essentially a phrase that represents the digital world we now live in. In an everyday sense, the Internet of Things is the connectedness that allows Google Now or Siri to derive your interests from the way you use your smartphone, or Nest to automatically determine what temperature you prefer to keep your house at when you're not home.

As a business, the single most effective thing you can do to increase your profitability is embrace The Internet of Things. You can and should go as far as to let The Internet of Things dictate every decision you make as a company. It's that important.

Chances are any technological device or development you can think of is a part of The Internet of Things. So if you use an iPad, a smartphone, a productivity app or any kind of software that streamlines your business, you are already engaged with The IoT.

The rapid growth of mobile devices and apps is all part of this digital revolution that's constantly moving forward (whether you realize it or not). Right now, you probably get a new smartphone every two years, maybe each year if you're a real techie. But the smartphones in five years will render today's devices totally obsolete.

In the future, you won't get a new device because it has a slightly bigger screen or a better camera, you'll want an upgrade so you can have holographic conversations with your friends and family.

## Exponential Growth

In their current forms, The Internet of Things and mobile technology are in their infancy, especially compared to what they will be next year or five years down the road. When it comes to the expansion of technology and impact the digital world has on our everyday lives, we aren't talking about a steady growth pattern that continues at the same rate for decades to come. The digital world is growing on a curve that bends directly up, which represents exponential growth.

I've said it before, but the aggressive development of the digital space presents complex challenges for businesses. It's difficult to run a business well, period, let alone while trying to keep up with almost unfathomable advances in technology that directly affect every industry and market.

There are two main points I hope readers and businesses now understand about digital marketing. The first is how absolutely necessary it is for everybody to keep their eyes on the digital horizon. Looking to the future and embracing technology (and the change that comes with it) are vital to achieving success in the digital world.

The second thing to remember is you aren't alone. Whether you need a detailed guide to help you implement your own strategy or a professional, like a WSI Consultant to deliver it for you, high-quality resources and marketers are just a click away.

And who knows? In 30 years, maybe a computer will be able to do it for you.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

### DAN MONAGHAN



With Dan's ability to foresee emerging trends and capitalize on them, he founded WSI in 1995 and it has since become the world's largest network of digital marketing consultants. In 1996, Dan wrote the book "Amazing Secrets of Profiting from the Internet" and has remained a thought leader in the fields of technology and digital marketing. Dan is a sought-after speaker on topics such as digital marketing, business strategy, and the next big waves of graph-based social technologies and big data.

Dan is committed to education and the sharing of best practices in the fields of franchising and technology and serves on the International Franchise Association's

Educational Foundation board. In his spare time, he enjoys mentoring and coaching young entrepreneurs and is a business school guest lecturer at institutions such as Cornell and Georgetown.

Dan is also the founder of “Make Child Poverty History” ([www.makechildpovertyhistory.org](http://www.makechildpovertyhistory.org)), a worldwide outreach program operating in partnership with World Vision. In June 2015, Dan climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro as part of World Vision’s “No Child for Sale” campaign.

## **PETER JASNIEWSKI**



Peter has over 30 years of experience in IT, Business Consulting and Digital Marketing (DM) Solutions. An experienced mentor and a recognized public speaker Peter is passionate about helping businesses and organizations gain full advantage of the Internet ecosystem. As a WSI franchise owner since

2000 Peter has been consistently ranked Top 25 among the network of WSI offices, was ranked #3 WSI Consultancy worldwide in 2010 and was a WSI Top Gun in 2014. Peter’s office has completed over 1,000 web design and DM projects for clients in Canada, USA, and the Europe.

Peter holds a Master’s degree in Information Technologies from Technical University Chemnitz, Germany. Prior to WSI Peter’s professional career included

management positions at companies like NCR Canada, PERLE Systems, and Copam Electronics / Germany.

As a WSI Certified Digital Marketing Professional, he also holds multiple certifications in Advanced Search Engine Marketing Strategies from Search Engine Academy. He is a member of SEMPO (Search Engine Marketing Professionals Organization), WSI's Professional Services group, a founding member of the WSI AdaptiveSEO™ consortium and a recipient of multiple international Web Awards from the WMA (Web Marketing Association).

## **CHRIS SCHOFIELD**



Over a decade ago following a successful career in Hi-Tech Senior Management, (culminating with a seat on the main board of a US Amex Listed Corporation), Chris made a “lifestyle” change and joined WSI in 2002. Coming from an Engineering background, the technical side of web technology greatly appealed to Chris. He opened a WSI “Solutions Center” in 2007 located in the UK and since then has built hundreds of successful complex technical web solutions for both direct clients and WSI consultants.

During his time at WSI Chris has won many awards for his projects, he was an initial member of the Internet Consultant Advisory Council, and Chairman of the WSI

Products and Technology Committee. Most recently Chris has become involved in Multi-Channel Marketing solutions primarily for “Regulated Industries”, main customers include Banks and Pharmaceutical companies.

### **J. BURNS SMITH, JR.**



Burns established his digital marketing agency in 2003. With clients across the southern United States, the core service offered by his agency is designing and implementing custom digital marketing strategies for clients.

Capabilities include search engine marketing, social media management services, custom website design and mobile marketing. Burns has extensive experience in the eCommerce space particularly in the area of multichannel selling.

### **FRANCOIS MUSCAT**

As a speaker, trainer and Digital Marketing Consultant, Francois conducts many training days, boot camps and conference presentations on digital marketing and social media. Francois’ training is aimed at everyone from Gen Y’s to Baby Boomers, with some of his most popular sessions geared around how to strategically use social media





networks like LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube for business and personal branding.

Francois is known for his ability to take complex Web and social media topics and make them easy to understand and accessible for everyday people and small business owners.

When he's not training, speaking and consulting in the digital space, you'll find him fishing, playing golf and spending time with his family.

## **ROB THOMAS**



Rob Thomas lives and breathes social technology and digital marketing and is a Fellow of the Institute of Sales & Marketing Management.

Rob Thomas has been a part of the WSI network for over 10 years and recognized as an expert in reputation management, digital and mobile marketing. Rob is a professional speaker who regularly speaks in North America and across the EMEA Region.

Voted as one of the top 50 Growth Coaches by Enterprise Nation Rob is also an authorized Growth Accelerator coach and trainer for sales and marketing.

## **BENJAMIN SMITH**



Benjamin Smith has been helping companies thrive as a digital marketing professional since 2002. He serves businesses all over the world from his office near Milwaukee, WI, USA. He is also the WSI Area Representative for Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Iowa, USA.

Prior to digital marketing, Benjamin has several years of retail management experience in big box stores. He also holds a degree in economics from the University of Wisconsin – Madison.

Benjamin specializes in the strategic optimization of online paid media channels. His team is responsible for a high-performing portfolio of multi-million dollar digital campaigns for clients large and small. He is certified by Acquisio and is a member of the Search Engine Marketing Professionals Organization.

## **CHUCK BANKOFF**



Chuck Bankoff is an International speaker, author and trainer to Internet Consultants in over 8 countries.

With degrees in graphic design, digital electronics and an MBA from Keller Graduate School of Management, his areas of expertise are search engine marketing, social media management, website design, landing page design and conversion technologies.

Chuck holds a variety of digital certifications including Google AdWords, SEMPO, HubSpot and eCommerce from USC Marshal School of Business. Chuck is based in Orange County, California, USA where he has been practicing digital marketing since 1999.

## **ANDRE SAVOIE**

Andre Savoie is a search and social marketing specialist who has earned certification through WSI's Advanced Internet Marketing Program



as well as the Search Engine Academy (taught by John Alexander and Robin Nobles).

He works with clients in the areas of marketing strategy, search engine optimization, pay-per-click marketing, and social media technology, such as blogging.

## **ERIC C. COOK, MBA**



Eric Cook, a former community bank executive of 15 years, now considers himself a digital strategist and works with clients to help them better understand and leverage the power of the Internet as a strategic business tool. An award-winning web designer with WSI, Cook is also a sought-after, nationally-recognized speaker in the financial services industry,

hosts a weekly webinar show called Free Webinar Wednesdays and is a graduate from the Graduate School of Banking at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, WI, USA in 2003. He now serves on GSB's faculty teaching on the topics of social technology. Cook earned his MBA in 1999 and holds undergraduate degrees in business administration and psychology.

He helps his clients in the areas of web development, search marketing and optimization, social media strategies, email marketing and "big-picture" digital strategic

planning. Cook is a member of the National Speakers Association. When he's not helping his clients succeed on the Internet, he can typically be found on one of his many bicycles training for his next triathlon or mountain bike race.

## ALISON LINDEMANN



Alison Lindemann has over 10 years of experience in the digital marketing world, working with clients in all industries from boutique operations to large corporations. Her background includes 17 years in corporate management, including the positions of Director of Sales as well as Director of Service Operations for

a multi-billion dollar organization. Alison authors the chapter on email marketing and is happy to share the fact that email marketing is alive and well, and should be a key component of any comprehensive digital marketing strategy. Her detailed review of tips and best practices will jump start your next campaign!

## MICHAEL WATKINS AND NICOLE DUPRE



A WSI Consultant since 2009, Michael Watkins has an extensive background in both traditional and new media. He began his career as an ad agency copywriter and television commercial producer then worked several years in broadcast sales and management for local FOX and CBS Television stations.

Mike's insights into the forever changing media world have become a vital resource to business owners and marketing directors. Having sold and managed literally hundreds of campaigns utilizing convergent media, his experience has made him one of the leading experts in digital media efficiency.

Nicole Dupre brings over 10 years of experience of marketing knowledge to WSI. She specializes in analytics, search engine optimization, search engine marketing, social media, and marketing automation. Mike and Nicole are WSI Top Guns and WSI Area Representatives for Nevada, Utah, Wyoming, New Mexico, Colorado, and Arizona.

**CHRIS LEONE**

As Chief Operations Officer of one of WSI's most successful agencies, WebStrategies Inc., Chris is responsible for leading all the day-to-day operations of the firm including inbound marketing, web development, and web analytics. He led the initiative to certify WebStrategies Inc. as a Google Analytics Certified Partner, one of only about 70

in the United States. His passion for business and digital media ultimately led him to join the WebStrategies team in 2008.

Chris has built and managed countless online advertising campaigns across a variety of different industry verticals and has led advanced, custom Google Analytics implementations for several high profile, high traffic websites.

Chris' work has been featured on numerous web publications including the Google Analytics blog and is a regular contributor to the Richmond Times Dispatch Business Section.





## NOTES

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*"It's not easy to master the complexities of the digital marketing world, but this collection of authors can get any brand closer than they envisioned."*

*Sharon Rowlands - CEO, ReachLocal*

*"It's only been two short years since the first edition of Digital Minds, but the entire online realm has changed dramatically! This 2nd edition couldn't have come at a better time - they dive deep into the complexities of the digital world, which is just what every business owner needs."*

*Jack Porter-Smith - Google Top Contributor*

*"Fourteen of the sharpest, most Likeable minds in the industry show us how to use digital tactics to shine brighter than the competition. Consider this book the perfect arsenal for any marketing team."*

*Dave Kerpen - CEO & Founder, Likeable Local  
and NY Times Best-Selling Author*

*"Outstanding. I highly recommend this read to anyone who aims to build a digital footprint that is actually useful and valuable to your audience."*

*Krista LaRiviere - CEO & Co-Founder, gShift  
and Member of SEMPO's Board of Directors*

The progression of the Internet hasn't slowed down one bit; in fact, it's only just begun. And with capabilities like visitor tracking, geo-targeting and personalized marketing, the business competition on the digital playing field has become more aggressive than ever. The advancements are rapid; adaptation is vital. And yet, business owners are either too tentative to dive in or want to get started but just don't know where to begin.

In the 2nd edition of WSI's Digital Minds, we provide a map (literally!) that's designed to help professionals navigate through the complexities of the digital marketing realm. Fourteen of WSI's thought-leaders explore how online strategies like web design, marketing automation, eCommerce, SEO, reputation management, email marketing and more have been shaped by online consumers and their mobile device du jour! By evolving alongside the growing trends, your brand will be equipped to leave the competition far behind.

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