



Digital Marketing Guide

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CREDITS

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Introduction to the Digital Marketing Guide



This guide is designed to provide a basic understanding of what digital marketing is and how your business can begin and/or increase your digital marketing efforts. Improving your efforts should result in an increase in qualified sales leads and greater profitability. This guide is designed to be practical and offers a step-by-step approach that includes worksheets to assist you in defining and refining your digital marketing strategy.

INTRODUCTION TO DIGITAL MARKETING

Digital marketing encompasses all marketing efforts that use an electronic device or the internet. Businesses leverage digital channels such as search engines, social media, email, and their websites to connect with current and prospective customers. Marketing has always been about connecting with your audience in the right place and at the right time. Today, in addition to traditional marketing methods, you need to connect with the members of your target market where they are already spending time: on the internet.

Enter digital marketing, which can be defined as any form of marketing that exists online. Digital marketing consists of the use of numerous digital tactics and channels to connect with customers where they spend much of their time: online. From your website to your business’s online branding assets—digital advertising, email marketing, online brochures, and beyond—there’s a spectrum of tactics that fall under the umbrella of “digital marketing.”

A changing sales and marketing process

Digital tools put information at a buyer’s fingertips and also give sellers the ability to flood potential clients with information. For this reason, buyers increasingly rely on their own ability to research solutions to their problems. While search engine optimization (SEO) and sales/marketing automation tools put information in the hands of the rational buyer, other digital tools like social media build trust with customers and tap into the emotional, automatic process of making a purchase decision.



In fact, research from McKinsey and Company found that on average two-thirds of the touchpoints during the evaluation phase of a purchase decision involve internet reviews, social media conversations, and recommendations from family, friends and online experts. This significant shift in consumer behavior means that businesses need to think differently about their approach to marketing.

Digital marketing tools have emerged to facilitate and automate the art of connecting with customers in a meaningful way. It is true that digital marketing can be confusing and time-consuming. The technology changes constantly and measuring effectiveness can be complicated. However, when done well, digital marketing can also significantly increase recognition, traffic, sales, and customer satisfaction for your business at a reasonable cost.

Does digital marketing work for all businesses?

Digital marketing can work for any business in any industry. Regardless of what your company sells, digital marketing involves creating buyer personas to identify your audience’s needs, as well as providing valuable online content. That’s not to say all businesses should implement a digital marketing strategy in the same way, but all businesses should take advantage of the availability of digital marketing.



B2B digital marketing

If your company is business-to-business (B2B), your digital marketing efforts are likely to be centered around online lead generation, with the end goal being for someone to speak to a salesperson. For this reason, the primary goal of your marketing strategy is to attract and convert the highest quality leads for your salespeople via your website and supporting digital channels. Beyond your website, you'll probably choose to concentrate your efforts on business-focused channels like LinkedIn, where your demographic is spending their time online.



B2C digital marketing

If your company is business-to-consumer (B2C), depending on the price point of your products, it's likely that the goal of your digital marketing efforts is to attract people to your website and have them become customers without ever needing to speak to a salesperson. For this reason, you're probably less likely to focus on "leads" in the traditional sense and more likely to focus on building an accelerated buyer's journey, from the moment someone lands on your website, to the moment he or she makes a purchase. This will often mean your product is featured in your content higher up in the marketing funnel than it might for a B2B company, and you might need to use stronger calls to action (CTAs) such as "Buy Now" or "Request a Quote." For B2C companies, channels like Instagram and Pinterest can often be more valuable than business-focused platforms such as LinkedIn.

Benefits of digital marketing¹

Increased recognition

By definition, participation in a digital network will increase exposure to a broad audience of potential customers. As employees, vendors, business partners, and customers interact with your content, a business builds awareness and a corresponding reputation. Each piece of content has the potential to reach a new network of potential customers.

More inbound traffic

Increased awareness for the business results in increased exposure to new networks of potential clients. These new contacts have the opportunity to connect with your content and build an emotional connection with your company before the sales process begins. Consumers can gather more information at precisely the moment when their interest is piqued.

Higher levels of customer satisfaction

Every interaction online is an opportunity to listen and respond to the needs of the customer. You can answer questions quickly and address complaints promptly. A business that takes the time to engage with customers directly and interact on a personal level will generate high marks in customer satisfaction and improve their chances for repeat business.

Improved brand loyalty

Developing a loyal customer base is one of the main goals of any business. Customers perceive social media as a window into the personality of your business and expect your social platforms to serve as channels through which to engage directly with your company. Studies show that consumers are far more loyal to brands that directly engage with them. In turn, loyal customers are eager to spread the word about a great product or service, and they usually turn to social media to express their opinions. Vocal, satisfied, and loyal customers will do your advertising for you.

Cost-effective

Digital marketing can be the most cost-effective component of an advertising strategy. Although it requires time to plan and create content that is meaningful, the actual distribution of the content can be inexpensive. As the consumer market transitions to a greater percentage of digital native customers, an effective digital marketing strategy will provide greater returns on investment as customers do much of the work in distributing your content to potential new customers.²

Create new ways to know your industry

By monitoring the activity on social media profiles, a business can observe customer interests and opinions that might otherwise be elusive. Insight into the marketplace can be one of the most powerful outcomes of an effective online presence. These insights can be useful with market segmentation, product development, channel strategy, and brand positioning.

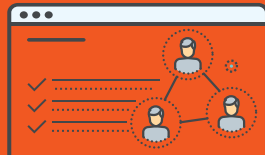
Opportunity to demonstrate your subject matter expertise

Well-produced, educational content designed to inform and support customer decision-making will establish a business as an authority in their industry. Demonstrating expertise and thought leadership will boost credibility and help build a respected brand.



QUICK GUIDE TO THE FIVE STEPS OF DIGITAL MARKETING

STEP 1
Prepare
for digital
marketing
PG 9



- Set goals
- Develop buyer personas
- Watch your competition
- Know your brand

STEP 2
Refine your
messaging
PG 16

- Create/find your content
- Research/determine your keywords



STEP 3
Choose your
channels
PG 23



- Establish or improve your website
- Optimize for search engines (SEO)
- Take advantage of email marketing
- Get listed on online business directories
- Be active on select social media platforms

STEP 4
Put it all
together
PG 36

- Make a plan that includes timeline, budget, and content calendar



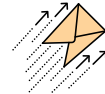
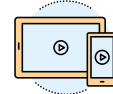
STEP 5
Measure,
analyze,
and revise
PG 38



- Track your leads
- Get up to speed on web analytics
- Evaluate your results and tweak your strategy

In true marketing fashion, you must persist! All things digital evolve rapidly. Modify your digital strategy to respond effectively to changes in your business, your industry, technology, and the competitive landscape. Understand that it takes time to achieve significant return on investment. Multiple touches are usually required to turn prospects into customers. Without consistent digital marketing efforts, your company will miss growth opportunities. Identify cost-effective assistance as needed and be patient as you work toward your goals.

1 Preparing for digital marketing



No matter if your company is B2B or B2C, big or small, selling locally or nationally, the next few steps are crucial to establishing a strong digital marketing foundation and solid online presence.

SET GOALS

Start by asking yourself, “What problem am I trying to solve?” This will help you determine the most effective digital marketing strategy for your needs. Some examples of problems could be:

- Lack of connections to or relationships with customers or others in the community.
- Not enough people know about your brand. Your goal might be to build brand awareness.
- Not attracting enough new customers. Your goal might be to aim for acquisition and lead generation.
- Existing customers aren’t buying often enough or aren’t expanding into trying new products. Your goal might be to increase product expansion with existing customers.
- The lack of ability to sell products online or the need to increase online sales.

Make your goals SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timely. For example, if you currently get five new leads a month, setting a goal of obtaining 100 new leads in the next 12 months is more realistic than setting a goal of 2,000 new leads during the same time period.

WORKSHEET—Digital Marketing Goals

Briefly describe the problem you are hoping digital marketing will help you solve.

How would you like your digital strategy to support and/or impact your business?

How would you define success of these goals? (For example, 20% more lead generation.)

Develop buyer personas

Clearly define your digital target by getting to know your audience. If you don't understand enough about who you're trying to reach, you'll struggle to deliver a message that's relevant enough to cut through. The good news is that you don't have to have a customer research agency on retainer to select your target market(s). The easiest way to make sure you do not come up with a watery "general" campaign is to make your own buyer personas, also called avatars, which are fictionalized, general descriptions of your key customer groups.

Start developing avatars by thinking about who your customers are and then grouping them into three or four buckets. Take each of these and create a character from each. Finally, give him or her a name, a photo, and a personality and document a few favorite things. Use the worksheet on the next page as a guide for creating your own customer avatars.

- What types of articles, facts, and/or experiences that are relevant to your industry will your avatar find interesting?
- What content will entice your personas to keep visiting your website or to engage in social media?
- What information will increase social media users' awareness of your company?

Additional resources for developing a customer avatar:

Who Is Your Perfect Customer? video: <https://www.eofire.com/fof1>

4-Dimensional Customer Avatar: <https://jonathanhowkins.com/4-dimensional-customer-avatar/>

How to Make A Customer Avatar in Five Easy Steps: <https://medium.com/@caelanmac/how-to-make-a-customer-avatar-in-five-easy-steps-d2535f616ac>

Do you know your market? Refer to this helpful SBTD Market Research Guide:



http://www.sbtcd.org/wp-content/uploads/market_research_guide_updated.pdf



WORKSHEET—Creating Your Customer Avatar

Your Customer Avatar

Name _____ Location _____

Age _____ Gender _____ Marital Status _____ # / Age of Children _____

Occupation _____ Job Title _____

Annual Income _____ Level of Education _____

Other _____

Goals _____

Values _____

Pain Points _____

Possible Objections _____

Role in the Purchase Process _____

Sources of Information: _____

Books _____

Magazines/Blogs _____

Websites _____

Gurus _____

Conferences _____

WATCH YOUR COMPETITION

You have likely spent time researching your competitors, but now is the time to research what they are up to *digitally*. Remember that your competitors are not just those who offer an identical product or service. You can think of your competition as the brands who offer the same products or services you do, brands that offer different products but compete with you in the mind of the customer, or those that might have a brand with a similar look and feel. Get inspired by your competitors' wins and use your differences to highlight what is unique about what you offer or your competitive advantage.

Not sure how to gather intel? Here's how to get started:

- Search for a few key terms related to your industry and note where each brand ranks on the results page. See the section on Keywords for more detailed information.
- Explore each of your competitor's website, sign up for their newsletter, and follow them on social media.
- Ask your customers what they think your rivals do well and what they love about brands in other sectors too.
- Note where and when you see your competitors' ads online and screenshot them.

Use the answers in this worksheet to gather more information for your decision-making. If your competitors are on a particular platform that appears to be a great way to connect with your target audience, make sure you have a plan to get on this platform as well. Identify some hashtags your competitors are using that are connected to your industry and make sure to use them too. Perhaps their online presence is lackluster, which means you have an even greater opportunity to capture an online audience hungry for connection.

WORKSHEET—Evaluate Your Company in Terms of the Competition

List your top competitors.

List social media platforms your competitors are using. (Tip: Go to your competitor's website and look for social media links such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Use these links to explore their activity on social media.)

What hashtags are your competitors using on their social media posts? (Hashtags are typically located at the end of a post and are preceded by #.) (See "The Beginners Guide to the Hashtag": <https://mashable.com/2013/10/08/what-is-hashtag/#H.mX4CO99PqX>)

Do you see any correlation between competitors' popularity and a particular action? Jot down your observations.

Is there something that your competitors are not doing that could be an opportunity for you? Learn from them, both their successes and failures.

KNOW YOUR BRAND

Messaging...in words

Your brand is how and why your customers choose you over your competitors. You can think of your brand as your company's personality, and it is something worth clearly defining. What do you stand for? What are your strongest character traits? How does this translate into your presence, from the images you use on your website to the language you use in your emails? By answering the questions below, you'll have a solid foundation for some basic, consistent digital marketing content and strategies.

WORKSHEET—Questions to Help Nail Down Your Brand Messaging

What problem(s) do you solve for your customer?

What are your distinctive benefits? List three to five benefits your customer gets from choosing your product/service that set you apart from your competitors.

What's your brand promise? This is like a pledge. What will you always do for your customers? This is the other key part of your proposition that separates you from the competition. How does it fit together? Take your answers so far and try to craft a single paragraph that covers them. It is ok if things merge and overlap; the aim is to end up with a unique message.

Can you make it shorter? Now, refine. Take your time and review your text again and again until you've distilled your value proposition to one clear line that captures everything you want to say.

Business/product name(s). Be exact. Do you ever use acronyms? Are these acronyms to be used externally?

Visual branding

It is important that your presence be consistent in look, feel, and tone across all digital platforms. Remember, you are building awareness and establishing your brand. When you think of McDonald's® or Coca-a-Cola®, very specific colors, fonts, and messaging come to mind, and you want the same recognition of your brand with current and future buyers. Brand consistency is a relatively simple but extremely impactful first step to successful digital marketing. Creating a brand style guide that includes all of your logos, colors, and other aspects of your branding will help you to be consistent in all efforts.

As people scroll through their newsfeeds or your website, they should connect your color scheme and graphics to your brand. Therefore, you want to make sure you have the necessary information in an accessible format. Share your brand style guide with anyone who is working with you on digital marketing or content creation. You should insist that anyone assisting with your marketing adhere to your style guide. Once you define a brand promise for your business, commit to it for the long haul and update it only with compelling reasons.



Logo

If someone designed your logo, look back in your files to identify the exact colors they used in the final, high-res version. If the designer did not provide you with this information, request it. Store your logo files in a location where anyone working on your marketing materials or creating content for your business can easily access them.

Colors

For each color you use in your branding, you should define the RGB (for online use) and the CMYK and PMS numbers (for printing). CMYK stands for cyan, magenta, yellow, and black. These are the primary colors for print. Whereas we all grew up knowing yellow and blue make green, and yellow and red make orange, people in the printing industry know that varying the quantities of cyan, magenta, yellow, and black creates an endless array of colors for print. PMS stands for Pantone Matching System colors. There can be so much variation in color using CMYK that Pantone provides a precise number for each color that allows for consistency. PMS colors facilitate a designer creating a logo that will print consistently from job to job and printer to printer. Knowing and using your PMS colors can streamline the process of printing, cut down on costs, and reduce potential color errors when printing.

Information on brand style guides:

- 🌐 Visit this link (<https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/inspiring-examples-of-small-business-branding>) for 15 examples of small business branding from HubSpot. Also, check out this post on Brand Style Guides at <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/examples-brand-style-guides>.



2 Messaging



Like branding, messaging is what you are conveying to consumers about your entity. The way you communicate to the consumer regarding your company, services, and products can:

- Connect you and your company to a specific industry.
- Elicit emotion and build relationships with the members of your target market.
- Educate members of your target market about the benefits of your products/services.
- Serve as a call to action.

In regard to digital marketing, you can create and relay the messaging for your business by developing original, relevant content and using strategically determined keywords.

Engage your employees

If employees are enthusiastic about your digital marketing efforts, your customers will more quickly embrace your new strategies. Employees are the trendsetters in this case. Get your employees engaged in thinking about ideas for blog and video topics and possibly writing content.

CONTENT

Why is content so important?

Finding content to post for your product, industry, or area of expertise is key to driving traffic to your website and increasing both your brand awareness and the level of recognition you receive as a leader in your industry. According to research, consumers are 131% more likely to buy from a brand immediately after they consume early-stage, educational content. Think about it as “teach, don’t sell”. The Content Marketing Institute boils this down to one simple truth: “Our customers don’t care about our products or services; they care about themselves. If we buy into this, then we must also accept that the majority of the information we produce for marketing purposes cannot be about ourselves. Our content must be based on fulfilling our customers’ needs and interests, so that they come to build a trusted and emotional connection with our brands.”³



At least 50% of the content you produce should be educational and relay the message that you are a trusted expert in your field. You can then relate the content to your products and services in many cases.

Also think of your content as “spreadable,” or likely to be shared. By sharing your content, does it strengthen a bond with others? Does it define a collective identity or confer a desired status?

Utilize the same content or ideas on multiple digital outlets. For example, if you write a new short blog, post it on your website, send it out in an email marketing campaign, and post it on social media. Be sure to incorporate links to your social media sites whenever appropriate. For example, you want to include your company’s website address and the icons for the social media networks on which you’re active in your email signature, on your business cards, in company advertisements, etc. Customers can then easily access your content, which increases the chances they

Content Ideas

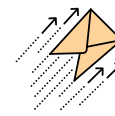
- Share info related to your business or industry that is not product promotion but has a similar focus.
- Share industry or product-related fun facts or random tips.
- Share general life hacks related to your industry that will make followers' lives easier.
- Share tips for how to make the best use of your company's products.
- Reply to posts in which your company is tagged or mentioned.
- Join popular conversations within your industry by including mentions, tags, or hashtags in your posts.



VIDEO



MICRO BLOGGING



E-MAIL
MARKETING



AFFILIATE
MARKETING

Humanize your company (many people are influenced by human interest stories & buy based on “people”)

- Share what you do from day-to-day.
- Share info about events that your company's employees plan to attend or have attended.
- Share news about your employees and your organization's internal culture, including awards received.
- Incorporate humor, but only if you have chosen this to be a part of your company's persona.
- Avoid hot topics and sensitive issues such as religion and politics.

will share it. In order to effectively promote your social media accounts, the content of your company website should be of the same high caliber.

Resources for content ideas

One useful website that can help you generate ideas for content is <https://www.answerthepublic.com>. This site prompts you to enter a word or phrase and then provides you with content ideas. All of the ideas generated might not apply, but this exercise can help get your creative juices flowing!

Look at your competitors' websites. While you certainly cannot copy information, you can get ideas about what other experts in your industry are talking about.

Use search engines to explore what others are talking about. Use Google to search for phrases or topics pertinent to your field to get ideas about what is important to your customers. Talk to your customers about what they consider to be hot topics and write short blog posts about them on your website. Link to these blog posts from your social media accounts.

Ask yourself: What content do we already have that we can repackage for our digital marketing efforts? Maybe you have written a press release or a flier. These can be great places to start.

Types of content

Blogs: tell a compelling story

When writing blogs, one of the most effective methods is to structure the blog in a storytelling format. Think of your blog posts in these basic terms:

A character has a problem and meets a guide who gives them a plan and calls them to action. This action either results in success or failure.

Your customers will relate to your blog post if your story describes someone they can relate to. For example, “John is a transportation manager at a school district.” (“Much like me,” your reader thinks.) “John was experiencing problems with transportation requests that came in too late because they sat on someone’s desk awaiting approval.” (“I can relate to that,” thinks your reader. “I have experienced the same issues/problems.”) “Then John met XYZ company, and they helped him evaluate this issue and worked with him to implement ABC product, resulting in a savings of \$XX.”

You provide a profile of a customer that your readers can relate to with issues that they can also relate to. Then, you explain how your product or service helped solve that issue and what the end results were.



Videos

According to Superkrush, adding videos to landing pages can increase conversions by nearly 90%. In addition, your website is 50 times more likely to appear on the first page of a search result if it includes a video. Eighty percent of your online visitors will watch a video, while only 20% will read its content entirely (VideoExplainers.com).



An explainer video is a great option to start with. This is a short (1- to 2-minute) video that explains what your product or service is about and why someone needs it. It’s like your elevator pitch in video form. Explainer videos increase the understanding level of the audience because they clearly show the benefits and features of your products/services and how they can be used to solve particular problems or provide specific benefits. You can use these short videos on your website or in social media posts, email campaigns, etc. A recent study suggests that 85% of people are more likely to purchase a product or service after watching an explainer video.

Creating explainer videos does not have to be difficult! There are many sites that will create a video for you at a reasonable price (around \$250 typically). You can also check out an awesome tool called RawShorts that you can use to produce short explainer videos. You can create a video by using their templates in minutes. The tool is free to use and experiment with, and the free version allows you five video downloads a month (but excludes premium graphics).

Tips to get started with RawShorts:

Go to <https://rawshorts.com>.

Click on “Video Templates” at the top.

Click on “Explainer Videos.”

Scroll down the page and review the available templates.

When you find one that fits your needs, click on “Edit Template.” You can place your wording and graphics or select from a wide range of stock animations and graphics.

Infographics

An infographic is a visual image such as a chart or diagram used to represent data or information. A well-designed infographic is worth a thousand words! Infographics can reach a wide audience by simplifying your messaging into an easy-to-digest format. An infographic can allow you to provide a quick overview of a topic, explain a complex process, or even raise awareness about a topic or issue.

Infographics are one of the most commonly shared forms of media. People generally read and understand visual information more quickly than they comprehend plain text. Therefore, when you create and/or post an infographic on your social media account, it can spread quickly and expand your reach on social media.

Make sure any infographic you create or share is simple, visual, and focused on a specific topic. It should include an enticing headline.

To get ideas regarding what infographics are and how you can use them, Google “examples of infographics” and then click on “Images.” Of course you can narrow your search by adding a keyword related to your industry, e.g., “examples of infographics, retail.”

One online tool that can help you create visual content is Canva (www.canva.com). This is one of the most helpful tools to use to create graphics for posts. Canva provides templates and graphics, so that you don’t have to start from scratch. The free version is sufficient for most small businesses initially.

Tip: If your business uses college interns, turn them loose on creating infographics! You will be amazed at their creativity.



KEYWORDS

What are keywords?



Keywords are topics and ideas that define what your online content is about. They are the words and phrases that people enter into search engines such as Google when looking for a product, service, or information. If you boil all of the content on your website—all the images, video, copy, etc.—down to a few simple words and phrases, these are your primary keywords. Using appropriate keywords in all of your content and on your website is a central element of effective Search Engine Optimization (SEO). As Google and other search engines have evolved, the focus of your keywords and phrases needs to be relevant to the content, answering the question of “what are my potential customers searching for.”

As a content creator and website owner, you want the keywords on your pages, blogs, and videos to be relevant to what people are searching for, so they have a better chance of finding your content among the results.

Appropriate keyword usage and the way that search engines provide people with information have become increasingly sophisticated. When digital marketing first began, people “stuffed” keywords into website pages, blogs, and content in hopes of someone searching for those words, even if the words were not directly relevant to the content of a particular article. Google and other search engines now negatively regard this tactic and may even penalize you for it. Search engines use advanced technology to gauge the quality of your content and its relevance to the search terms people use. You want to create accurate, engaging content that organically uses keywords and phrases relevant to your chosen topic. Think about the searcher’s intent and then write accordingly to provide the best answers to his or her questions.

Why are keywords important?

Keywords are the bridge between users searching for products and services and the massive amount of content on the internet. Keywords are as much about your audience as they are about your content. You need to understand how people ask for what you offer; this might be quite a bit different than how you would describe it yourself. Your goal is to rank well in search results and drive visitors to your website. To do this you need to understand the needs of those visitors and the words they use to describe what they are looking for. You can learn a lot about the type of language and phrases people use by talking to your customers and frequenting forums.

One of the first steps you need to complete before you create content for your website and other digital marketing tools is to identify your potential keywords and then research similar words and phrases that people use to find your product or service online. Fortunately, there are tools available to help you learn about the keywords you should be using to describe your products and services. Once you have determined your keywords, use them throughout your content (in blogs, product descriptions, website copy, etc.). You can use the worksheet on the following page to begin determining your keywords.

Choosing the right keywords can help you avoid a lot of frustration. If you are just getting started with SEO and keywords, you might want to choose keywords that are not highly competitive because they may be too difficult to rank for. Here is a good article on how to avoid choosing the wrong keywords: <https://www.websearchsocial.com/seo-mistakes-wrong-keywords/>

How and where to use keywords

Website Once you have decided on the keywords to focus on, ensure that your website includes these keywords frequently throughout your website copy. Google will index your website and relies on your text, images, and video, etc. to rank how relevant your content is. Pay particular attention to the title element and the text of each web page, utilizing keywords and phrases that match the intent of the page.

Blogs Providing good content on your website and social media platforms is key. See the section below on Content/Messaging. As you write your blog posts, keep your keyword list in front of you and focus on using keywords appropriately.

Social media posts As you create social media posts, be sure to use your keywords frequently as they pertain to the content of the post.

Videos Use keywords in both the description of the video and as tags.

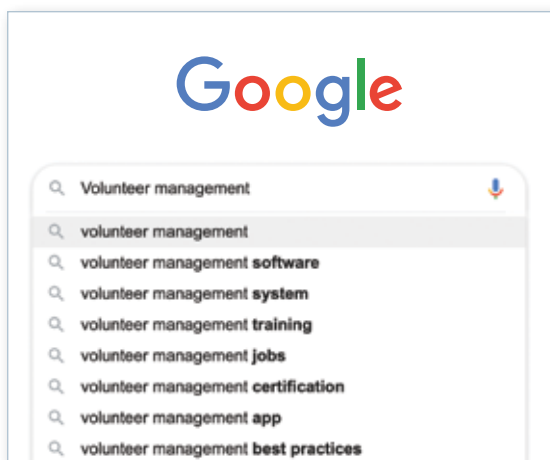
Use the following steps to get started with determining potential keywords:

Worksheet—Determining Your Keywords

Make a list of 5 to 10 important topics about your business. Think about what topics come up most in sales conversations or in conversations with customers. What are customers thinking about in terms of what you offer? These should be fairly general topics that you will drill down into.

Brainstorm keyword phrases that you think your customers would search for. Try to think like your customer would think. These won't necessarily be your final keywords yet. You will refine these through research next. Do this for each of the topics from the previous step.

Look at suggested keywords in Google. If you are struggling to come up with words and phrases, go to Google.com and type in a few search words and see what comes up in the suggested list of keywords.



Narrow down your list of keywords using keyword research tools (see tips below).

Tools for researching keywords

Keyword research is one of the most important and high-return activities that you can do to increase traffic to your website and ultimately convert leads into sales. By researching keyword demand in your targeted market, you can learn which terms and phrases to target with SEO and also learn more about your customers.

Here is a link to a great guide for learning about keyword research for beginners:
<https://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-seo/keyword-research>.

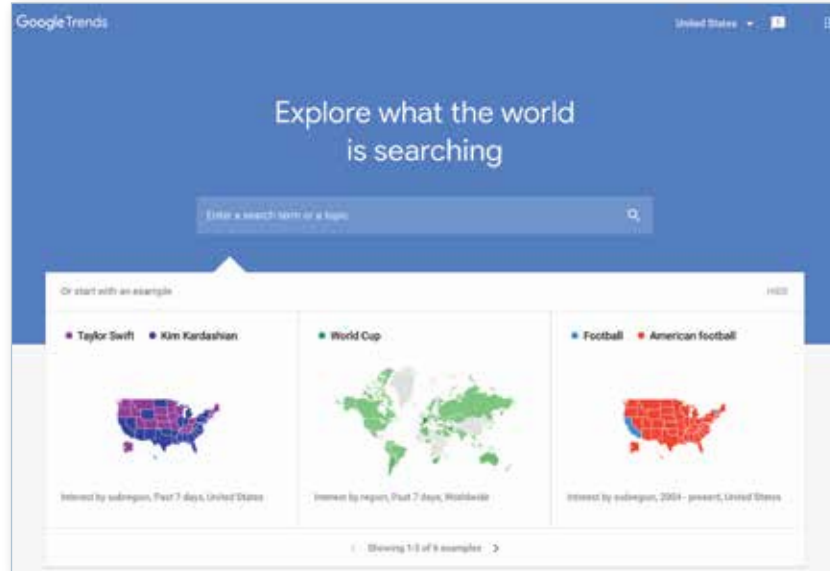
Google Keyword Planner

Google Keyword Planner is a tool you can use to get search volume and traffic estimates for keywords you are considering. <https://ads.google.com/home/tools/keyword-planner/>.



Google Trends

Google Trends allows you to search for a particular topic or a specific set of search terms on Google. Use the tool and you can see search interest in a topic or search term over time, where it's most-searched, or what else people search for in connection with it: <https://trends.google.com>.



3 Channels

After setting goals, making decisions to establish a brand, researching the industry and competitive environment, and considering messaging to relay, you can determine which digital marketing channels are likely to be the most effective for your company. This section provides a brief overview of:

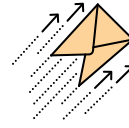
- Websites and search engine optimization (SEO).
- Email marketing.
- Online business directories.
- Social media: Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, Pinterest, and YouTube.



SEO



MICRO BLOGGING



E-MAIL
MARKETING



AFFILIATE
MARKETING

We will also discuss how to get started with your strategy. Given the massive volume of digital marketing activities a business *could* do, it's important to prioritize and recognize that you just can't do everything, especially when you're small. Priorities vary from one business to another. For example, maybe an HVAC company doesn't need a social or email strategy right away; instead they need to prioritize the launch of a clean, easy-to use, and mobile-friendly website. Because they serve a limited geographical area, they need to make sure they are listed on Google Maps and in local business directories, as well as considering paid search results. The key is spending some time thinking about which elements of this puzzle might be important for accessing your specific customers and focusing on those pieces first. Don't try to do it all right away or you will end up overwhelmed. Start with the channels that are the most important for reaching your ideal customers.

WEBSITE

A website is one of the primary ways you can market your business digitally. It serves as a landing page for online searches, includes your contact information, provides information to visitors, and can facilitate e-commerce.

Don't have a website?

Depending on the functionality your website needs, it can be fairly simple or more complex (for example, if your customers need online purchasing capabilities).

Resources to help you create your own website:

<http://www.wordpress.com>

<http://wix.com>

<http://squarespace.com>

<http://weebly.com>

<http://godaddy.com>

If you need to incorporate e-commerce for selling goods and services online, you may consider outsourcing your website creation and management. Check with your business advisor for recommendations or referrals to providers.

Website checklist

First and foremost, make sure your website is not an afterthought. Your site is a critical investment in the success of your business. Think of it as the 21st century storefront.

WORKSHEET—Website Checklist

- ❑ **The website includes relevant keywords.** See the previous section in the guide on Keywords for more information on determining them; they are critical to people finding your website. Carefully review the content on your pages to see if the messaging is consistent and easy to understand.
- ❑ **The branding is consistent with other digital tools.** Use your Visual Branding Board and Brand Messaging worksheets above to review.
- ❑ **The website is easy for you to update often to keep the search engines happy.** Search engines will rank your site higher if you are actively updating content. These could be in the form of short blog posts or videos, for example.
- ❑ **The website is able to track analytics.** You will want to create a Google Analytics account and add the Google Analytics tracking code that is provided to your website. This is easy to do and will allow you to see how many people visit your site, how long they stay, and what pages they visit. See the section on Analytics for information on creating a Google Analytics account. Enter your Google Analytics code and login information to the right for future reference.
- ❑ **The website includes links to social media accounts.** These are typically located in the header or footer areas of your website, so that they are easily accessible from every page.
- ❑ **The website has been previewed on mobile devices, and it functions well.** This is critical, especially considering that 50% of online sales are made on a smartphone. To test your site, access it from a browser on your phone. Do the design and content of the pages adjust to be easily readable on a small screen? If so, your site is “responsive” or “mobile-friendly,” meaning people will find it to be accessible from a mobile device.
- ❑ **The website load time is good.** You can test your website speed and other aspects of your site at <https://testmysite.thinkwithgoogle.com/>. If your website loads slowly, you are guaranteed to be losing customers. Talk to your website developer, or begin by making sure your photos are the right file size for online use, so that they don’t slow down your site’s load time.
- ❑ **Check for broken links or missing items.** Use this Broken Link Checker in Chrome: <https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/check-my-links/ojkcdipcgfaekbeaelaapakgnjflfglf?hl=en>. Simply click and add the extension to Chrome when prompted. Then go to your website URL within Chrome and use the icon to check for broken links, which can negatively impact your search results.
- ❑ **The website has a clear call to action.** What is the goal of someone visiting your website? Is it to order product, contact you for a demo, or ask for more information? Your website should have clear calls to action that are highly visible. Examples include buttons that read: “Request Information,” “Obtain a Free Trial,” or “Buy Now.”
- ❑ **Use web forms to capture leads.** For many small businesses it may take time for web visitors to become customers (this is called conversion or converting leads). If you are an “immediate” service business (e.g., a restaurant) web forms may not be critical. In contrast, if your customers need to get to know more about you or need education about your products or services before making a purchase, web forms allow you to capture who is coming to your website and what they are interested in. When visitors come to your site, they are expressing some level of interest in your offerings, but they might not be ready to buy. That said, they might be willing to identify themselves by giving you their email address, if you offer them something in return: a piece of content, a demo, a quote, etc. Site visitors’ email addresses are digital marketing “gold” because you can use them in email marketing campaigns, social media campaigns, etc. Website creation tools that are mentioned in this document have easy-to-use options for creating web forms.

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION (SEO)

What is SEO and why is it important?⁴

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the practice of increasing the quantity and quality of traffic to your website through organic search engine results. SEO and ranking well help you build a predictable and scalable sales model. SEO and ranking well are just means to an end. Do you convert visitors to customers (and keep them)?

Let's review the main components of SEO in more detail:



Quality of traffic:

You can attract all the visitors in the world, but if they're coming to your site because Google tells them you're a resource for Apple computers when you are actually a farmer selling apples, this is not quality traffic. You want to attract visitors who are genuinely interested in the products or services you offer.

Quantity of traffic:

Once you have the right people clicking through from those search engine results pages (SERPs), more traffic is better.

Organic results:

Ads make up a significant portion of many search engine results pages. Organic traffic is any traffic that you don't have to pay for.

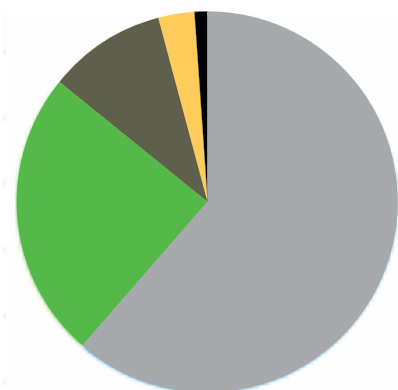
Organic search provides an average of 33% of a website's traffic (this percentage can be as high as 75%, depending on your audience).⁵ Therefore, optimizing the right traffic through organic search can increase sales and brand awareness.

You must help a search engine understand what your site is about in order for it to rank you.

The major tools used in SEO are:

- Keywords.
- Search-Friendly Site.
- Link Building Campaigns.

A typical example of the origin of search traffic for a website



1. ■ Organic Search 61.4%
2. ■ Direct 24.6%
3. ■ Social 10%
4. ■ Referral 3%
5. ■ Other 1%

EMAIL MARKETING

An email marketing service helps businesses manage and use email effectively as a marketing tool. Basic features include the following capabilities: creating and sending email messages to large contact lists, designing attractive emails using email templates, creating and formatting newsletters, and gathering the contact information of people interested in your offers. Email marketing is one of the best investments a business owner can make. Perhaps the most important benefit is the sheer value. Basic email marketing services are almost always free. Of course, it will cost money to build your list of customers and prospects, but sending an email costs nothing and can earn you a substantial customer following. Another valuable benefit is the ability to track numerous aspects of your campaigns. This includes being able to see which recipients open your email, which links are being clicked, who has forwarded your email, how many emails bounced (were not delivered), and how many people unsubscribed.

One of the first considerations for email marketing is whether you have a good list of email addresses for prospective customers. Your email client can serve as a customer relationship management (CRM) system, compiling contact information in one place. On most email platforms, you can simply import your customer list or database to begin! Many options exist for email marketing services. Two to consider are:

www.constantcontact.com (Pricing is based on the size of your list of contacts; free trial is offered.)

www.mailchimp.com (Offers a free new business version that will be sufficient to start with in most cases.)

ONLINE BUSINESS DIRECTORIES

A business directory is an online list of businesses within a particular niche, location, or category.

Quickly disappearing are the days when people go to the Yellow Pages to find local businesses. Today, people are turning to the internet as a way to find trusted business recommendations. One way local businesses can be found is through inclusion in online directories. Adding a listing to these online directories is easy. If you only list in a few, you're missing a huge opportunity for online searchers to find you. Adding to these listings should not cost money; do not pay to be listed on these.

Research online business directories relevant to your industry. A list of top directories is below:

- Yelp
- Bing
- Yahoo!
- Better Business Bureau
- Angie's List
- Yellow Pages
- Bizjournals.com
- TripAdvisor
- Home Advisor
- Foursquare
- Apple Maps

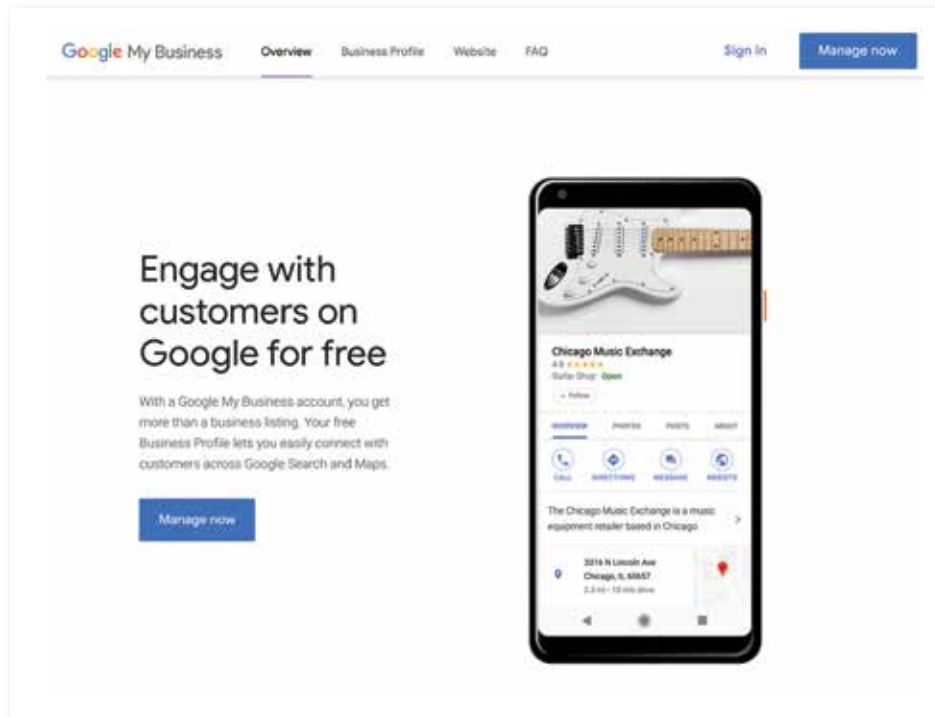


Use this link to find business directories by business category to ensure that you are listed on niche sites for your industry: <https://www.brightlocal.com/resources/top-local-citations-by-business-category/>

Use Google to your advantage

We live in a world of micro moments. Just think, when you are on vacation and are trying to find a spot near you for coffee, what do you do? You likely Google it. The same could be said for trying to find the perfect Father's Day gift, the ideal interview outfit, or the reason why your car is making that funny noise all of a sudden. The business at the top of your search that doesn't have the word "ad" written beside it shows up free of charge. It gets to the top of Google's list based on their algorithm, which has several factors, including your website's use of relevant keywords and up-to-date information.

In fact, 76% of people who search on their smartphones for something nearby visit a business offering this product or service within a day.



Always claim your business listing on Google.

Use the link below to the free Google worksheet to submit your business information to Google.

Here's how to get your business on Google...for FREE:

1. Visit: <https://www.google.com/business/>.
2. Fill in your information.
3. Google will require you to verify your address by inputting a PIN you receive on a postcard in the mail.
4. Make sure your hours are correct, including holiday hours.
5. Add photos.
6. Describe your business.
7. Once you start getting reviews, respond to them (the good and the bad) in a timely manner.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media introduction

Social media networks exist as a source for information, relationships, and connectivity.

Humans are emotional beings and make purchase decisions based on emotions and gut instinct. Humans often research purchase decisions to collect the data to justify their subconscious intuition. Rational decisions take time, effort, and research, but emotional decisions are automatic. Social media is, first and foremost, an emotional outlet where people express how they feel and connect with their community. Communicating effectively through social media connects our business to our customers and can drastically shorten the sales cycle.

When people connect through social media and share content, they are sharing the feeling that good content creates. It is no surprise that consumers respond better to educational content that builds trust, creates a relationship, and provides value before the selling begins.

Social media connects billions of people across the globe. For instance, Facebook has over 1.65 billion users as of March 2016; Twitter has 310 million; YouTube has 1 billion; and LinkedIn has 433 million. If access to this densely-populated audience is freely available, take advantage of it!

Identify social media platforms

You don't need to be on all social media platforms but wherever you are, you need to be all there. Take what you've learned from your competitor research and avatar creation and determine which social media platforms to be active on. Perhaps you've learned your customers are on three different social media platforms; this doesn't mean you need to be on all three right away.







If you're operating on a shoestring budget and have little time, choose one of the three (possibly two if there is significant overlap in content) and work on building consistency and messaging. Below are some general rules of thumb for content on any type of social media, as well as some specifics for each platform.



General rules for social media:

- ☼ Make your username similar to your business name so you are easy to find.
- ☼ Posts and interactions should be 80% educational, 20% marketing in general.
- ☼ Your posts should be very visual. Use photos, infographics, and other visuals to draw attention. Canva is a great tool for creating graphic content. See the section on content above.
- ☼ Incorporate videos. See the section on video located above in this guide.

SELECTING THE BEST SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM(S) FOR YOUR BUSINESS

	 Facebook	 Instagram	 LinkedIn	 YouTube	 Twitter	 Pinterest
PURPOSE	Post comments, share links, and share photos to build relationships	Share photos and videos that represent your brand	Professionally network and share successes	Create and share videos	Share updates, news, and articles; connect based on topics	Link your products, services, and content by creating "pins"
DEMOGRAPHICS	Ages 25–54 60% female	18–29	30–49	All ages; strong appeal to men	18–29	18–35 80% female
BEST FOR	Customer relationships; connections; transparent conversations; updates/feedback; events	Generating leads through brand engagement (visually)	Professional and business development; job posting and searching; building relationships and trust	Tutorials or demonstrations; brand awareness; service industry	Public relations; grouping topics using hashtags	E-commerce; influencing buying habits; displaying content; lifestyle-related content
CONTENT TYPES	Text, photos, videos, stories/livestream, paid ads	Mainly photos, short videos, stories	Text, videos, articles on business topics	Videos	Text of 280 characters or less ("tweet")	Pinning links to various websites

Facebook

Facebook is a social media website where you can post comments, share links, and share photos.

Content:

- Videos less than one-minute long.
- Stories.
- Always include a visual.
- Post with a close-knit community feel in mind.
- Include a call to action, e.g. a link to get more information.
- Educational content from other sources.



Business strategies:

- Testimonials/reviews.
- Use contests to grow.
- Add special events to your page.
- Add a call to action.
- Target your ad to geographic area, interests, and likes.
- Ask questions of your fans.
- Guest post on other pages and ask for guest posts.
- Share articles, videos, resources, or other pages/other people's posts.
- Ask for and keep track of testimonials/reviews.

<https://www.facebook.com/business/learn/facebook-page-basics>

https://www.facebookblueprint.com/uploads/resource_courses/targets/354917/original/index.html

<https://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/how-to-build-a-facebook-page-for-business-a-guide-for-beginners/>

Instagram

Instagram is an app for sharing photos and videos on a smartphone. To get started, download the Instagram app from the Google play store or the iPhone app store.

Content:

- Quality photographs.
- Short videos.
- Capturing moments with short clips to create your Insta-story; great for giving your customers the inside scoop.
- User-generated content.
- Definitely want to identify useful hashtags.



Business strategies:

- Put a face to your company.
- Feature happy customers.
- Create and use brand #hashtags.
- Identify and use trending #hashtags.
- Ask questions and create discussion.
- Create regular themed posts.
- Offer sales and giveaways.
- Ask customers and employees to #tag, follow, and @mention you.
- Offer a behind-the-scenes look in Instagram stories.
- Connect account to other networks
- @mention your staff and customers who use Instagram.

[https://help.instagram.com/307876842935851/?helpref=hc_fnav&bc\[0\]=368390626577968&bc\[1\]=835763516568404](https://help.instagram.com/307876842935851/?helpref=hc_fnav&bc[0]=368390626577968&bc[1]=835763516568404)

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a social media site designed with business and career professionals in mind.

Content:

- Share posts that reveal to the professional world your company's successes within your industry.
- Share info about open positions.
- Share articles related to business philosophy.
- Share useful information related to your industry.



Business strategies:

- Search for sales leads.
- Post updates from company.
- Link to product pages.
- Mine follower info for insights into customer needs.
- Build a robust company page.
- Post jobs.
- Highlight company culture/identity in posts.

Have a personal LinkedIn presence

LinkedIn has both personal pages and company (business) pages. Every business owner should have a personal presence on LinkedIn.

You are your brand, and now it is time to own it. By creating a LinkedIn profile for yourself you are establishing your credibility and thus that of your business. Learn more about what LinkedIn is and why you should be on it here: <https://www.lifewire.com/what-is-linkedin-3486382>.

Note that for the most part LinkedIn is free, and normally there is no need to upgrade to a premium account.

To sign up for LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com>.

Reasons you need to join:

- Helps build trust. Acts as a professional validator.
- Clients and possible customers see your LinkedIn profile when they Google you.
- Provides a place to connect with future employees or collaborators.
- Facilitates networking.
- Helps you develop your personal branding.

Simply signing up is not enough. Make sure you take some time to Google tips on how to set up a quality LinkedIn profile. Your profile should definitely include a professional photo, a thoughtful “headline,” and enough info on your professional background to build trust. There are lots of tips online to get more advice on creating an effective profile.

Personal strategies:

- Import initial connections from email.
- Find connections based on your professional and educational background and experience.
- Give and ask for endorsements and recommendations.
- Be very specific in describing what you do and what benefits your skills offer to others.

Twitter

Twitter is a news and social networking site where people share information in 280 characters or less, a format also known as a “tweet.”

Content:

- Short, clear, concise messages in 280 characters maximum.
- Soundbites, news.
- Use informal language.
- Posts should be calls to action.
- Use images and links to expand on your 280 characters.



Business strategies:

- Organize followers in lists.
- Monitor your brand tweets.
- Keep original tweets short.
- Offer contest to name product.

- Use hashtags to designate topic.
- Post hashtag for industry events.
- Identify trends with a hashtag.
- Recommend colleagues on #followfriday and form partnerships.

<https://business.twitter.com/en/basics/create-a-twitter-business-profile.html>

Pinterest

Pinterest is an online pin board where users can socially collect and share bookmarked websites, graphics, and other content.

Strategies:

- Review other business boards.
- Use creative pin titles and keywords in descriptions.
- Focus on lifestyle, not product.
- Style product photos.
- Pin photos relating to products.
- Overlay title on photos.
- Curate lifestyle boards.
- Use playful, fun board titles.
- Pin images from clients.
- Mix content: yours and others.
- Create inviting boards by making 40% of your pins inspiring and motivational, 40% instructional and educational, and only 20% about your brand—including profiles, specials, and contests.
- Connect with other social media accounts and engage with the community via repining and tagging other pinners.



YouTube

YouTube is a video sharing website. Users can upload videos and then use the YouTube URL to link and embed the videos into other mediums like websites, emails, and other social media platforms.

Content:

- Informational, educational, tutorial, or entertaining videos.

Business strategies:

- Use videos to create content relevant to your business.
- Be the subject matter expert through tutorials, unpackaging, and review videos.
- Write a thorough description and title.
- Link other partners and resources in the video notes.
- Choose the right categories and tags.
- Consider collaborations.



Paid options

When it comes to digital marketing, you can think of sharing your content/advertising in three ways. One, your potential customers are hearing directly from you and find you organically; you own the content they are viewing. Two, other people in the digital realm, such as bloggers, hear about your business and share some information about you or share the content you have created, which is often referred to as “earned content.” And lastly, there is the paid option for digital marketing. It is important for you to consider all three options and that your strategy doesn’t depend too heavily on any one of them. If a business owner expects digital marketing to provide new clients in the short term, paid options should be an early component of the strategy (if the budget is available). You can start with paid ads by setting small daily spend budgets and testing the results.

Before using any paid option, identify:

- Your budget.
- The specific audience you hope to target with a paid ad.
- What action you want people to take upon seeing your ad.
- How you will evaluate your campaign.

Social media

Social media paid options, which include boosting posts or creating promotions/ads, can be a great way for B2C companies to get their business in front of potential customers who might not know about them otherwise. When used correctly, these channels can offer a significant return on investment.

You can advertise your brand on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter for a relatively low cost. Target users by advertising based on location, demographics, apparent interests, behavior, and/or previous connections. In order for your ads to be successful, it is important that you refer back to your avatar. For instance, a small yoga business located in Raleigh, North Carolina can choose to advertise only to women between the ages of 20 and 60 residing in Raleigh.

Facebook ads tutorials: <https://www.facebookblueprint.com/student/catalog>

Pay-per-click (PPC) advertising

All companies should consider PPC advertising. B2B companies are likely to find more success with PPC advertising than social media ads because it is often much more difficult to target the correct audience on social media.

For instance, a cell phone repair company may acquire more customers by posting an advertisement for its website any time someone searches “phone repairs” on a search engine such as Google. Using PPC campaigns, this company can create targeted keyword searches to filter who sees its advertisement. To learn more about PPC advertising, go to PPC University at <http://www.wordstream.com/learn>.

Approximately 70–80% of all online search traffic is through Google, so you’ll likely want to consider using Google AdWords for your PPC advertising. Check out this Google AdWords tutorial for more information: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgl9rHdm9KojNRWs56QI_hg

Bing and Yahoo make up the other 20–30% of search traffic, so they could be additional options, depending on your specific target audience. Keep in mind that Yahoo, Bing, and Google are set up differently, so you can’t just copy and paste a game plan for one search engine to another and expect optimum results.

4 Putting it all together



MAKE A PLAN

Making a plan will help you begin to develop a successful digital marketing strategy. You want to determine the amount of time and money that you can realistically commit to digital marketing on a consistent basis. Mark time off on your calendar, even if it is only a few hours a week to start with. You should determine a budget that includes specifics about how funds will be allocated. Initially your budget might only include a few software tools to help you create and post content; later it might grow to include paid ads or marketing campaigns. Remember to start with a few action items and be consistent!

Worksheet—Digital Marketing Strategy

Starting with Digital Marketing can be overwhelming if you try to do too much at once. This worksheet can help you create a manageable starting point for your digital marketing, considering the resources you have available.

Channel:	Strategies:	Timeline:
Website		
Email Marketing		
Online Business Directories		
Social Media		

CONTENT CALENDAR

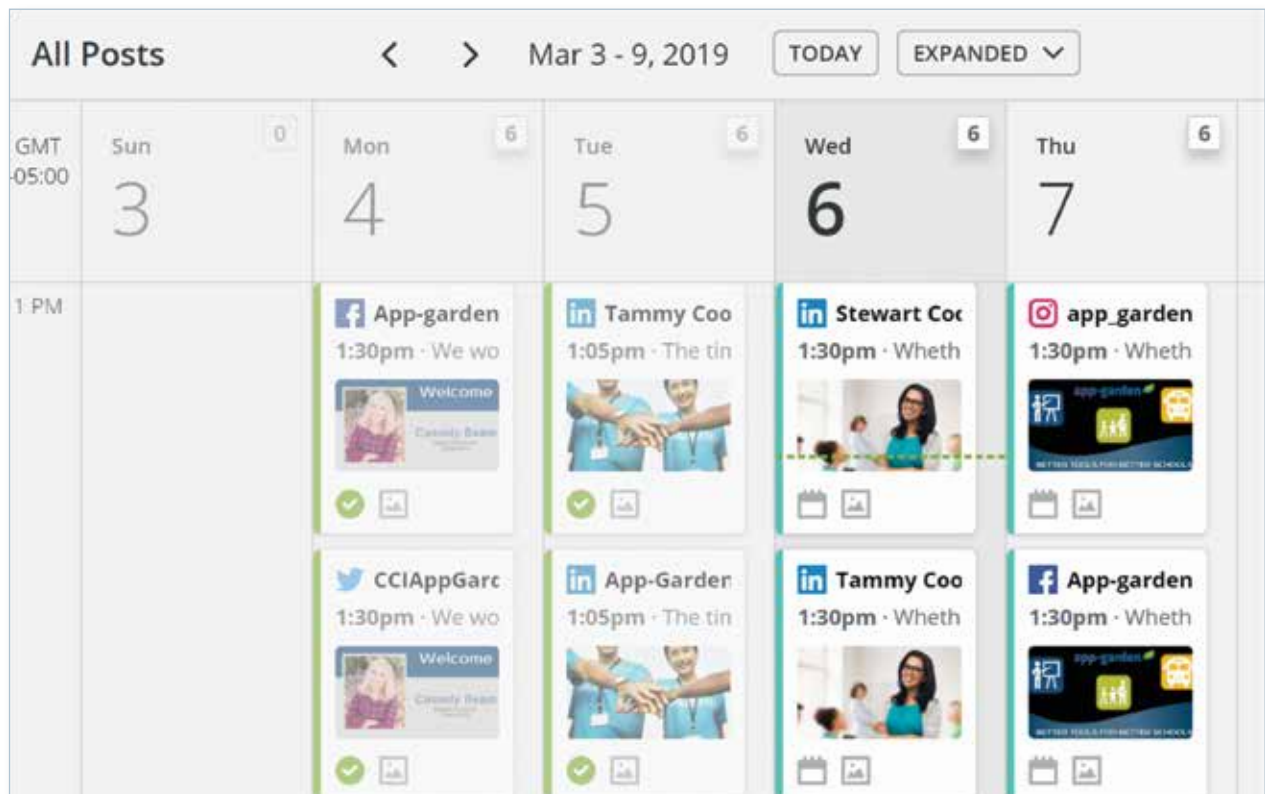
A content calendar is an incredibly valuable tool. It can be as basic as documenting different holidays, national days, and times when your business has special deals or promotions. You can use the calendar to establish timelines for newsletters and blog posts, as well as to identify what specific subject matter you want to cover. You can start with a simple Word document with each month included as a heading. If you have a whole team of folks that you collaborate with, consider using an online tool like Trello (see below). Trello allows you to move items through the publishing process and assign tasks to different individuals on your team.

If you want to stick with a tool you are already comfortable with, consider using a spreadsheet.



When it comes to scheduling social media posts to multiple outlets, consider trying Hootsuite (<http://www.hootsuite.com>). Hootsuite will consolidate your experience, alert you to messages, and help you keep up. Hootsuite allows you to connect to multiple social media outlets and schedule posts into the future. This makes it possible to schedule posts out for months at a time and use the same posts for multiple media outlets. The free version is sufficient for most small businesses to start with:

www.Hootsuite.com.



5 Measure, analyze, and revise



Digital marketing efforts do not end when campaigns begin. Another crucial part of implementing a successful digital marketing strategy is analyzing your results. Initially, there will be trial and error to fine-tune channel selection and strategy. By tracking leads, analyzing results, and monitoring analytics, a company can decide what is working and what is not. This, in turn, should result in heightened brand awareness, cost savings, and greater overall return through increased sales.

The process of digital marketing is an ongoing process of testing, measuring to see which efforts get results, and continuing to refine. Which messages are most effective with your target audience? Which social media platform obtains the best results for your business? Are there particular topics that drive more traffic than others?

LEAD TRACKING SIMPLIFIED

Tracking leads does not have to be a complicated process with intimidating spreadsheets or special software programming. Select a method that is feasible for the business (both financially and in terms of time) and track all leads, not just those resulting from digital marketing. Your tracking tool can be as simple as a spreadsheet or a shared document with tally marks. The key is to track the origin of every lead and routinely review all methods of marketing for effectiveness. Even a simple “How did you hear about us?” is sufficient. If you are using web forms to capture website visitors and their interests, be sure to define a way to keep a list of emails in order to use them for email marketing or ad campaigns.

Tracking leads is even easier with digital marketing. Most platforms have built-in analytics. You simply commit to routine monitoring of these analytics to see what aspects of your strategy need tweaking. Remember: marketing not only costs money, it also takes time and energy to maintain. Focus your energy on what efforts are helping you meet goals and modify the rest based on their results. This will help you achieve the greatest possible return on investment.



Introduction to web analytics

As consumers become increasingly comfortable researching and buying products online, a website has become a requirement for doing business in the digital economy for most companies. Just as a business owner would observe customers in a retail location to understand their buying habits, it is equally important to understand how customers are interacting with a website. This knowledge can help organize and promote website content to accomplish a company's business goals. Web analytics is the measurement, collection, analysis, and reporting of website data for the purpose of understanding and optimizing web usage (Digital Analytics Association).

If your goal is to drive a larger volume of traffic to your website and ultimately achieve more sales or product/service recognition, you need to understand where your web traffic is coming from. This will help you analyze where to put your efforts as well as your marketing dollars. Web analytics give business owners insight into human behavior, so they can know where visitors come from, what they like, and what they don't like. Analytics shed light on how visitors use a given website and whether they find what they need. Website analytics help companies spend their marketing budget wisely and measure the return on their digital marketing investment. They let the company know if the desired outcome is being achieved.

By tagging each page of a website with a tracking code, Google Analytics will immediately detect and track each unique visitor's activity on the site. This data will be accessible in your Google Analytics account and can be filtered in numerous ways depending on how the data is to be used. The home screen of Google Analytics shows the number of users, sessions, and bounce rates, as well as session durations, over a specified period of time. A series of standard reports provides quick access to who has visited your website (audience), how they got there (acquisition), the most popular pages, how long they spent on your site (behavior), and whether visitors are doing what the company wants them to do (conversions). Each report allows companies to customize the time frames and variables to extract precisely the data they want. Google Analytics makes specific recommendations on how to optimize a given site for the best user experience. All the data collected about users will help companies organize the site content to achieve the company's goals.

By using tags in online ads, social media messages, press releases, marketing emails, and all other campaigns, a company has the ability to test and track user responsiveness to each customer communication channel. Such insight helps a company fine-tune their message and precisely allocate marketing budgets to achieve the greatest impact.

Analytics is commonly perceived as technical and complicated, and there are numerous tools available to help you collect and analyze website data. For the purpose of this introduction, we will focus on Google Analytics because it is ubiquitous and free.

To get started with Google Analytics, you will follow some basic steps to set up a Google Analytics account and then link it to your website in order to start gathering data on your website traffic. Even if you don't understand yet what to do with this information, it is good to start gathering data as soon as possible. Use the link below to access a "Getting Started with Google Analytics" help document:

<https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1008015?hl=en>

Google Analytics Academy has a series of web-based tutorials that remove the complexity of data analytics and accelerate the learning curve:

<https://analytics.google.com/analytics/academy/>

For more information about using Google Analytics to measure your social media activity, see the helpful article below:

<https://sproutsocial.com/insights/google-analytics-social-media/>

Once you have a Google Analytics account and have the tracking code tied to your website, you can generate some basic reports that will tell you who is coming to your website and guide you to certain actions. Below are some examples of basic reports from Google Analytics, along with some actions you might take based on these reports.

Example 1: Traffic by city

How to get to this report: (Google Analytics > Audience > Geo > Location > Primary Dimension = City)

Actions to consider:

- Focus marketing dollars (e.g., search and social media ads) in markets where brand value and recognition appear to be highest.
- Target email campaigns to subscribers in high-interest geographical areas.

City	Acquisition			Behavior		
	Users	New Users	Sessions	Bounce Rate	Pages / Session	Avg. Session Duration
	24,608 % of Total: 100.00% (24,608)	24,576 % of Total: 100.02% (24,571)	30,403 % of Total: 100.00% (30,403)	67.58% Avg for View: 67.58% (0.00%)	2.02 Avg for View: 2.02 (0.00%)	00:01:27 Avg for View: 00:01:27 (0.00%)
1. (not set)	1,352 (5.33%)	1,329 (5.41%)	1,570 (5.16%)	81.53%	2.35	00:01:26
2. San Antonio	597 (2.35%)	588 (2.39%)	727 (2.39%)	48.14%	2.34	00:02:29
3. New York	561 (2.21%)	558 (2.27%)	586 (1.93%)	93.00%	1.16	00:00:21
4. Ashburn	539 (2.12%)	539 (2.19%)	539 (1.77%)	98.89%	1.01	<00:00:01
5. Charlotte	466 (1.84%)	434 (1.77%)	566 (1.86%)	66.78%	1.79	00:01:16
6. Frisco	397 (1.56%)	396 (1.61%)	496 (1.63%)	41.53%	2.15	00:01:13
7. Dallas	380 (1.50%)	353 (1.44%)	444 (1.46%)	65.99%	1.71	00:01:21
8. Houston	373 (1.47%)	356 (1.45%)	443 (1.46%)	63.88%	2.05	00:01:32
9. Atlanta	364 (1.43%)	342 (1.39%)	461 (1.52%)	69.41%	2.07	00:01:22
10. Raleigh	316 (1.25%)	295 (1.20%)	387 (1.27%)	51.68%	2.29	00:01:59

Example 2: Traffic by device category

How to get to this report: (Google Analytics > Audience > Mobile > Overview)

Actions to consider:

- Focus web design/optimization decisions on the medium that is most relevant. For example mobile is critical, but it is not the most common device used by the customers of every business, as you can see below.
- Adjust marketing dollars to reflect device preference among target audience. For example, a given company might increase search ad bids for desktop as opposed to mobile, depending on the data in their analytics.

Device Category	Acquisition			Behavior		
	Users	New Users	Sessions	Bounce Rate	Pages / Session	Avg. Session Duration
	24,608 % of Total: 100.00% (24,608)	24,576 % of Total: 100.02% (24,571)	30,403 % of Total: 100.00% (30,403)	67.58% Avg for View: 67.58% (0.00%)	2.02 Avg for View: 2.02 (0.00%)	00:01:27 Avg for View: 00:01:27 (0.00%)
1. desktop	14,669 (59.92%)	14,736 (59.96%)	18,447 (60.67%)	62.10%	2.29	00:01:42
2. mobile	8,930 (36.48%)	8,959 (36.45%)	10,884 (35.80%)	76.85%	1.57	00:01:03
3. tablet	881 (3.60%)	881 (3.58%)	1,072 (3.53%)	67.72%	1.81	00:01:25

Example 3: Traffic by source/medium

How to get to this report: (Google Analytics > Acquisition > All > Source / Medium)

Actions to consider:

- Assess value/impact of organic social media strategy: is it driving traffic?
- Identify impact of paid ads in terms of traffic and engagement. In the example above, paid ads are visits for which “Medium” = “cpc” (cost per click).

Source / Medium	Acquisition			Behavior		
	Users	New Users	Sessions	Bounce Rate	Pages / Session	Avg. Session Duration
	24,608 % of Total: 100.00% (24,608)	24,576 % of Total: 100.02% (24,571)	30,403 % of Total: 100.00% (30,403)	67.58% Avg for View: 67.58% (0.00%)	2.02 Avg for View: 2.02 (0.00%)	00:01:27 Avg for View: 00:01:27 (0.00%)
1. google / organic	12,317 (48.97%)	11,908 (48.45%)	14,895 (48.99%)	61.14%	2.02	00:01:40
2. (direct) / (none)	5,719 (22.55%)	5,720 (23.27%)	6,496 (21.37%)	71.37%	2.12	00:01:12
3. google / cpc	4,112 (16.22%)	3,978 (16.19%)	4,706 (15.48%)	85.23%	1.29	00:00:22
4. bing / organic	1,021 (4.02%)	1,002 (4.08%)	1,268 (4.17%)	60.49%	1.86	00:00:58
5. yahoo / organic	339 (1.34%)	317 (1.29%)	397 (1.31%)	47.61%	2.34	00:01:46
6. fb / cpc	297 (1.17%)	296 (1.20%)	341 (1.12%)	92.38%	1.09	00:00:14
7. facebook / social	271 (1.07%)	263 (1.07%)	340 (1.12%)	84.41%	2.04	00:02:42
8. linkedin / social	116 (0.46%)	104 (0.42%)	151 (0.50%)	80.79%	1.48	00:00:58
9. m.facebook.com / referral	104 (0.41%)	104 (0.42%)	104 (0.34%)	99.04%	1.04	00:00:07
10. facebook.com / referral	96 (0.38%)	93 (0.38%)	96 (0.32%)	94.79%	1.10	00:00:03

Example 4: View all pages by pageviews, bounce rate

This report provides the number of visits by website page and can indicate how much traffic is being driven to specific pages. The bounce rate is the percentage of single page visits (or web sessions). It is the percentage of visits in which a person leaves your website from the landing page without browsing any further.

How to get to this report: (Google Analytics > Behavior > Site Content > All Pages)

Actions to consider:

- Use insights on most popular blog posts or pages to set content strategy/agenda for the coming months.
- Identify pages with highest bounce rates and work to create a more engaging user experience (to keep visitors on the site).

Web analytics can be an intimidating aspect of digital marketing to tackle on your own; it is important, however, that you begin tracking your traffic as soon as possible. At some point, you may decide to engage help in analyzing your traffic, but you **MUST** be gathering the data in order for someone to help you analyze it. Don't worry about trying to understand all of the complexities of analytics at the outset, but **DO** sign up for a Google Analytics account and monitor traffic to your website at a minimum!

Page	Pageviews	Unique Pageviews	Avg. Time on Page	Entrances	Bounce Rate	% Exit
	61,386 % of Total: 100.00% (61,386)	45,532 % of Total: 100.00% (45,532)	00:01:26 Avg for View: 00:01:26 (0.00%)	30,403 % of Total: 100.00% (30,403)	67.58% Avg for View: 67.58% (0.00%)	49.53% Avg for View: 49.53% (0.00%)
1. /	12,992 (21.18%)	10,333 (22.69%)	00:01:13	9,217 (30.32%)	58.78%	51.45%
2. /login/	7,186 (11.71%)	4,750 (10.43%)	00:02:09	1,897 (6.24%)	56.04%	52.18%
3. /virtual-sub-training/	7,044 (11.47%)	5,350 (11.75%)	00:01:41	4,450 (14.64%)	74.88%	62.27%
4. /travel-tracker/	6,538 (10.65%)	4,619 (10.14%)	00:01:22	3,499 (11.51%)	56.82%	48.24%
5. /volunteer-tracker/	5,808 (9.46%)	4,237 (9.31%)	00:01:30	3,029 (9.96%)	62.46%	50.90%
6. /single-post/2017/03/28/school-beautification-benefits-students-more-than-we-think/	1,834 (2.99%)	1,609 (3.53%)	00:06:28	1,602 (5.27%)	88.14%	86.42%
7. /single-post/2017/04/26/why-understanding-diversity-is-important-in-the-classroom/	1,353 (2.20%)	1,254 (2.75%)	00:07:01	1,245 (4.09%)	92.29%	91.57%
8. /single-post/2017/01/19/common-challenges-substitute-teachers-have-and-how-to-manage-them/	1,145 (1.87%)	1,051 (2.31%)	00:06:18	1,044 (3.43%)	90.04%	89.34%
9. /about-us/	1,036 (1.69%)	821 (1.80%)	00:01:22	207 (0.68%)	68.60%	45.17%
10. /single-post/category/substitute-teacher-training/	781 (1.27%)	368 (0.81%)	00:00:22	44 (0.14%)	65.91%	14.47%

ANALYZE, REVISE, AND EXPAND ON YOUR RESULTS

In true marketing fashion, the work is never done!

All things digital are constantly evolving and changing, much like your business. You need to modify and expand on your digital strategy so that you can respond effectively to changes in your business, your industry, the competitive landscape, and the technological environment. A digital marketing strategy should be a living plan that is adaptable and encompassing.

A good rule of thumb is to re-evaluate your digital marketing plan each quarter. It takes multiple touches to impact consumers, so give yourself some time to fully implement your strategy. Review each channel/platform of your strategy and analyze the results compared to your goals. Which platforms are achieving success? Which platforms or strategies are not providing results?

BE PATIENT

Understand that results from your digital marketing strategy won't necessarily happen overnight. A business may initially commit to having a consistent social media presence or updating their website with fresh content often. The business will stick with their plan for a few weeks or even months, and after not seeing a dramatic increase in whatever metric they are tracking, they will give up. The key is to persist. Yes, always refine your strategy, but at the same time, be patient. A lot of digital marketing builds on itself and requires time to achieve significant return on investment.

In Reality, It Looks More Like This:

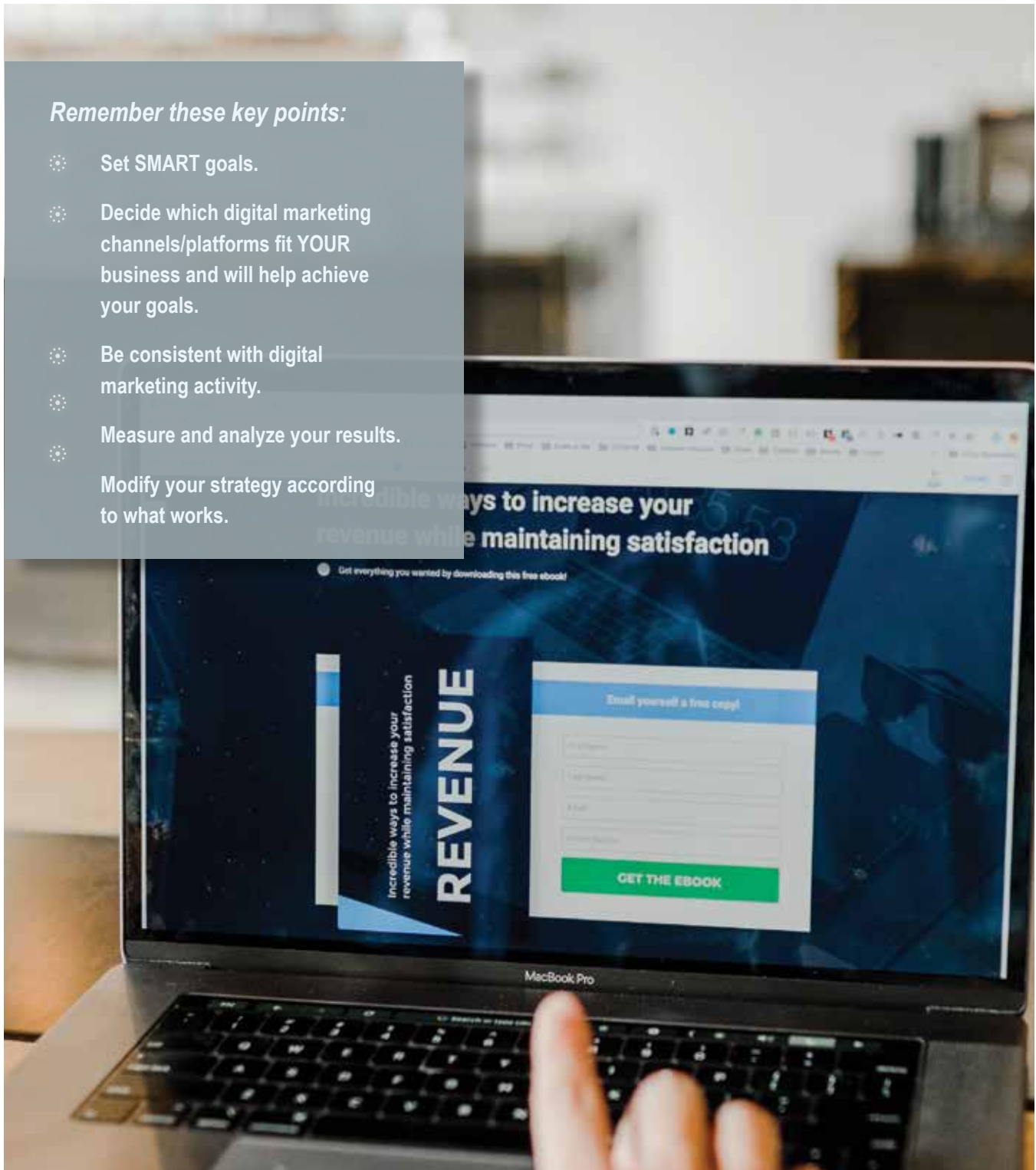


Conclusion

Without a digital strategy in place, your company is bound to miss growth opportunities. By planning and implementing a specific digital strategy, you can better advertise and spread awareness of your company's purpose and products. If you implement your digital strategy well, your company will likely generate new sales leads and penetrate new markets.

Remember these key points:

- ⊗ Set SMART goals.
- ⊗ Decide which digital marketing channels/platforms fit YOUR business and will help achieve your goals.
- ⊗ Be consistent with digital marketing activity.
- ⊗ Measure and analyze your results.
- ⊗ Modify your strategy according to what works.



Appendix A: Commonly Used Terms

JavaScript

A programming language used in the browser to collect data on the visitors to a website.

Tracking code (tag)

The specific JavaScript code that sends data to Google Analytics each time a new web page is loaded. The website developer places this code on the website.

Cookies

Cookies are a small piece of code that a website places in a visitor's browser that allows the site to remember visitors and welcome them back.

Account

Where a company stores all its analytics data within Google Analytics. Typically, each company will have one account, and the account ID will be included in the Tracking Code.

Property

Each domain name (mycompany.com) that you want to track separately. Most companies will have just one property.

Filter

Limits and sorts the data that Google Analytics uses to generate reports.

View

A specific way of looking at the analytics data for a web property. Filters are applied to create unique views.

Session

When someone visits a site within a fixed amount of time; the default is 30 minutes. One person that visits twice in 30 minutes will be counted as one session.

New session

When the website sets a cookie for the first time. Could be a new visitor, a returning visitor arriving from a different device, or a returning visitor that has cleared their cookies since their last visit.

Recurring session

When a visitor returns with a cookie from a previous visit.

Users

Number of unique cookies that have been seen over a period of time.

Session duration

Time between first and last page view of each unique user.

Bounce rate

Percentage of sessions where a user only views one page and leaves the site.

Page view

Every time a unique page is viewed by a unique user.

RGB

RGB (red, green, and blue) refers to a system for representing the colors to be used on a computer display. Red, green, and blue can be combined in various proportions to obtain any color in the visible spectrum.

CMYK

CMYK stands for cyan, magenta, yellow, and black. These are the primary colors for print. Whereas we all grew up knowing yellow and blue make green, and yellow and red make orange, people in the printing industry know that varying the quantities of cyan, magenta, yellow, and black creates an endless array of colors for print.

PMS or Pantone

PMS stands for Pantone Matching System colors. There can be so much variation in color using CMYK that Pantone provides a precise number for each color that allows for consistency. PMS colors facilitate a designer creating a logo that will print consistently from job to job and printer to printer. Knowing and using your PMS colors can streamline the process of printing, cut down on costs, and reduce potential color errors when printing.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

SEO is a marketing practice focused on growing visibility in organic (non-paid) search engine results. SEO encompasses both the technical and creative elements required to improve rankings, drive traffic, and increase awareness in search engines.

Resources

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesagencycouncil/2018/05/08/the-small-business-guide-to-digital-marketing-on-a-shoe-string/#c2ad89e3b0ab>

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Endnotes

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4 <https://moz.com/learn/seo/what-is-seo>

5 Marketing, Crash Course Edition by Franc Ramey of Enotto

sbttdc

sbtcd.org