

10 WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY

The power and effectiveness of a robust digital marketing strategy is unquestionable: now, more than ever before. During the COVID-19 pandemic, consumers of all ages were forced even further online, and many of their newly acquired digital habits will certainly stick.

Businesses that kept pace with the digitalised economy have benefited, but those who may have lacked in this area have quit with the awakening. Those who are not agile enough to evolve with and adapt to changing consumer behaviour will quickly be left behind.

This process is what Schumpeter terms 'Creative Destruction', in which capitalist business cycles see processes of innovation 'incessantly destroying the old one, incessantly creating a new one.'¹ With the rise of the attention economy, we see a new form of production appealing, entertaining content. This is where the true genius of digital marketing is revealed: consumers are willing, active participants within the marketing scheme.

So, how well is your brand adapting to this evolving market? Has your brand adopted the right techniques to not only survive in this new business cycle, but thrive? Let's look at what goes into a successful digital marketing strategy, and discuss some of the common mistakes.

¹(Schumpeter, 1950)

1. ONLINE VISIBILITY

We're talking basics here. In this day and age, it is absolutely essential for brands to establish an online presence. For businesses selling goods and/or services, a strongly branded website is not only the first point of contact or main source of information, but also extremely crucial in establishing successful e-commerce traffic to enable sales. Instead of keeping up with a traditional physical store, many businesses have turned to e-commerce to establish their brand online.

E-commerce provides many benefits to your business, including diversifying your traffic streams, increasing your reach, affording you innovative marketing opportunities, and allowing you to more efficiently target the consumer. An e-commerce site meets your market where they are, facilitating ease of purchase.

97% of consumers use the internet to search when they need to find a local business, and 75% of people who use their smartphones to search for something nearby will visit a local store within 24 hours.² With this in mind, having a polished Google Local profile not only makes your brand seem professional, it also maximises contact-time as consumers can easily ascertain where you are and when you're accessible - whether for sales or meetings.

However, as all brands are now well aware, online visibility on its own just isn't enough anymore.

²(Forbes, 2018)

2. MOBILE-FIRST

Brands sometimes ignore the difference in mobile versus desktop user experience. However, 40% of people only use a smartphone for search and 50% of all B2B inquiries are now made via mobile.³ As the customer increasingly consumes content through their smartphones, device optimisation is vital.

Mobile optimisation refers to the process of ensuring that visitors who access your site from their portable devices have an experience honed for that device, allowing a more seamless customer journey. This means brands must consider elements such as the page speed, weight, site design, and site structure. Consumer attention span is ever-reducing and mobile users are often shopping on-the-go, meaning they don't have the patience for a consumer journey that has not been streamlined.

Indeed, neglecting to optimise your site is not an option if you want your Google ranking to remain healthy. Since July 2018, Google has prioritised mobile page load speed as a key metric when determining a website's search result ranking. If your mobile website is slow or unresponsive, it correlates with a hefty penalty for your search engine ranking.⁴ As Google is responsible for about 94% of total organic search traffic worldwide, you can't afford to ignore its shift towards a mobile-friendly experience. Therefore, any investment in website development must include mobile optimisation.⁴

³(Techjury, 2020)

⁴(Business News Daily, 2020)

3. SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

3.6 billion of us are active social media users; this figure is set to explode to 4.4 billion by 2023.⁵ As of January this year, 49% of digital consumers use at least one social media channel (though this data was not stratified by age: younger users have a much higher social media penetration). TikTok boasts over 560 million active users, and Instagram has 1 billion monthly active accounts.⁶

By any metric, these are huge markets and are therefore equally crucial spaces for a brand's digital presence. Social networks are one of the fastest growing industries in the world; with a projected annual growth of 25% over the next five years, businesses must invest in Social Media Marketing (SMM).

All of the top platforms have their own benefits, from YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, Twitch and so on. Each individual social media space has its own demographic and attracts an audience base with engendered habits and interests. Selecting the most appropriate platform for your business and making use of its capabilities is the best practice when initiating a campaign. Brands must additionally tailor their social media strategy based on whether they are a business-to-business (B2B) service, or business-to-consumer (B2C) service.

Social media success is measured through impressions, reach, interaction, and conversions. Impressions measures the number of times your content has been viewed, and Reach assesses the number of people who have seen your brand's content. Together, they can tell you how far your content and its message has penetrated social media, making it a great indicator of a brand's potential audience size.

Interactions and Interaction Rate are some of the most important social media metrics; it evaluates how many people are engaging with your brand and its content across social media platforms. Finally, from a business perspective, conversions are where you can measure the Return on Investment (ROI) of your strategy.

A conversion is when a consumer completes the "Call to Action" that your campaign set out to achieve, whether that is signing up for a newsletter, or completing a purchase. It is important to remember that each metric is contextual; low interaction in one niche may be considered a high interaction in another.

TikTok very recently released their 'Pixel', which allows pre-established customer specific behaviour tracking for performance marketing purposes. This means that all the information regarding which websites users have viewed, items they've put in their baskets etc is available prior to the customer viewing the upcoming ad, allowing brands to target specific, relevant consumers. Whereas cookies are embedded in the user's computer and can be removed, TikTok Pixel reports back to a server which allows brands to use the data for performance marketing purposes.

⁵(Statista, 2020)

⁶(Statista, 2020)

4. INFLUENCER MARKETING

How often do you tell a family member or friend about a product or service you absolutely loved, or even hated? In marketing, this is referred to as Word of Mouth Marketing (WOMM) and it impacts all brands. WOMM is triggered by a consumer's positive or negative experience with a content creator, or influencers, who have gained huge followings on social media. A recent study by the UK-based Direct Marketing Association (DMA) found that family member or friend's perception of the brand too - sometimes permanently.

Consumers trust their network which is what makes positive WOMM so powerful. Customers are more than twice as likely to take onboard suggestions from friends and family as they are from advertising.⁷ In today's hyper-connected world, a single recommendation can have great impact - which is hugely important for any business, especially considering that it is a free, organic form of advertising.

Influencer marketing is a new evolution of WOMM. In today's digital age, consumers tend to gather pre-purchase product information online before the ultimate decision making process. This information can be acquired through influencers from a wide variety of sources - idyllic pictures on Pinterest or Instagram, in-depth product review videos on YouTube, or discussions in threads on Instagram or Twitter.

Consumers tend to trust influencers as role models in a variety of genres: health and fitness, diet, fashion, travel, interior design, and more. Influencers with a large reach are significantly able to affect pre-purchase behaviour and overall brand sentiment by posting content that endorses the product or brand.

Influencer marketing provides one further benefit to your brand. Ad blockers continue to be downloaded all over the world, as the name indicates, they attempt to filter out online adverts so that the consumer never sees them. A report from 2019 found that 30% of internet users now employ ad-blocking software.⁸ It may seem that ad blockers herald the end of online advertising, but in reality it simply means that new ways of circumnavigating these blockers must be developed.

Influencer marketing targets the more tech-savvy ad blocking generation, making it a great advertising strategy. Over the past decade, influencer marketing has developed into a new form of digital marketing in which content creators, or influencers, have gained huge followings on social platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, TikTok and so many more. Influencer marketing has become one of the most effective forms of digital marketing as consumers trust the recommendations from the content creators that they follow.

In comparison to traditional marketing strategies, influencer marketing is much more cost efficient because it allows you to directly target your desired audience by partnering with creators who have audiences regardless of whether it is online or offline. A great customer experience results from not only meeting customers' expectations, but exceeding them: if a customer struggles to find the necessary online support, they will most likely move on to your competitor.

⁷(ChainStoreAge, 2019)

⁸(SocialMediaToday, 2019)

5. CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

Customer engagement is the connection between brand and customer. Providing a high-quality customer experience is an essential component of customer engagement. Online businesses must ensure that their brand is responsive and approachable.

This can be achieved through closely monitoring your socials and responding to comments or queries promptly, consistent email communication with customers, and frequently addressing business reviews. In so doing, you build consumer loyalty and trust, as well as accurately presenting your dedication to your brand. Businesses that respond to comments and reviews are perceived as 165% more trustworthy than those who don't bother.⁹

Businesses often neglect online customer service. However, customers want to feel special and helped in any form of brand interaction regardless of whether it is online or offline. A great customer experience results from not only meeting customers' expectations, but exceeding them: if a customer struggles to find the necessary online support, they will most likely move on to your competitor.

Ensuring a positive experience for the consumer through online customer service not only guarantees that your business will stand out and remain memorable, but it may also contribute to organic word of mouth marketing!

⁹(Google, 2020)

6. DIGITAL ADVERTISING

Digital ads are everywhere, from your computers, to your tablet and phone: they have become a part of our everyday life. Digital advertising - unlike traditional advertising - is more flexible and universal, enabling you to tell your brand's story across multiple channels through images, text, and videos.

Digital advertising is also able to target a specific audience. Many platforms now offer options that allow a brand to segment their audience based on demographics, geographic location, interests, and more. A brand can thus get their message, campaign or promotion in front of their desired audience. The best part is that digital advertising is highly measurable. Analytics allows brands to track metrics such as impressions, reach, cost per click (CPC), cost per acquisition (CPA), bounce rate, click-through rate (CTR), and conversion rate. Tracking your digital advertising metrics allows brands to perfect their marketing strategies over time based on their results.

Was the outcome of your campaign not what you hoped for? Tracking your metrics could let you know where something went wrong. A high bounce rate may indicate that your website is too slow or that the content is not easily digestible, whereas a low CTR may alert you to poor keyword selection or broken links. If you suspect the content is the issue, you could implement A/B testing, in which users are shown 2 or more variants of the same page at random and their behaviour can inform you which content - or content format - performs better.

These are all invaluable learnings which enable you to identify which areas of your campaigns can perform better next time. Keep these learnings in mind for future digital advertising campaigns.

7. SEO & KEYWORDS

How do you get your brand to rank prominently on search engines for the right keywords? Through a well-optimised SEO and keyword strategy. Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) refers to the process of increasing both the quantity and quality of your website traffic through organic search engine results. SEO is about understanding what people are searching for online, the answers they are seeking, the words they're using, and the type of content they wish to consume.

Gaining these insights can help brands with their keyword research, which ultimately gives their business a valuable head start as to what consumers are interested in based on their searches. Marketers can then use these insights to meet the needs of their customers by providing content that is relevant to each individual consumer and his/her search patterns.

Bear in mind that organic searches are most often the primary source of website traffic. For example, when searching for "vacuum", Dyson may be one of the top ranked websites, whereas to find Hoover, you may need to go through a few pages before you land on their company page. Being highly ranked leads to more brand exposure, organic conversion, and website traffic. A robust SEO strategy can go a long way in supporting your PR efforts and content marketing strategy, as well as ensuring long-term relevant traffic to your website(s).

Some businesses may also benefit from blogging as it is an exceptional boost to SEO, as well as connecting people to your brand through textual and visual blog content that shows your audience or consumers a personal side of your business.

8. EMAIL MARKETING

Email marketing alerts the clients on your email list to new products, services, and promotions. It can also bolster brand sentiment by informing your audience of the value of your brand - for example any high-profile events hosted or important partnerships/milestones/anniversaries your business achieved. Critically, it keeps your base engaged in your brand between purchases.

Email is a highly effective tool for marketing because it forces the recipient to respond in some way: an email will remain in your customer's inbox until it is either opened, deleted, or archived. A good communication strategy that employs interesting content, relevant keywords and visually digestible emails will all drive the consumer towards opening rather than archiving! Email marketing is also very cost effective. A recurring study by the UK-based Direct Marketing Association (DMA) found that for every \$1, email has a return on investment ROI of \$38.¹⁰

You can also use email content such as newsletters to direct customers to your blog, website, or social channels. Analytics will again report on the proportion of click-throughs and customer interaction, allowing you to see the sort of emails your customers respond most positively to. Once on your website, you can further track important metrics like bounce rates and purchases to build a comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of your output, strategy, and website.

¹⁰(HubSpot, 2020)

9. BESPOKE USER EXPERIENCE

Conducting a customer behaviour analysis through analytics is a great way for brands to get to know their customers. Customer behaviour refers to an individual's buying habits, including social trends, frequency patterns, and background factors influencing their decision to buy something. Studying customer behaviour allows companies to understand their target market in order to create more enticing products and/or services, and tailor their marketing strategy.

These behaviours can be tracked digitally with what are commonly called Cookies. Cookies are a very small unit of code which sit in the written software of a page, allowing companies to gather information about each visitor that lands on their website and track their behaviour whilst on the website. Using this information ultimately improves their experience as they are shown increasingly relevant and personalised content over time.

Cookies also inform you about how your website visitors found you - an essential component of digital marketing. Did they arrive at your website organically, or through a digital referral? They can tell also your business which - and how many - pages your leads have viewed: the higher the percentage of pages viewed by a lead, the more interested they are in your brand. This information can entice brands to get creative on how they will keep their leads on pages for longer, as well as advancing their journey from viewing two pages, to ten.

Cookies have often been a controversial topic of discussion when it comes to individual privacy. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is a framework for the regulation on data protection and privacy in the EU. Not all cookies are used in a way that could identify users, and the majority are and will be subject to the GDPR. This includes cookies for analytics, advertising, and functional cookies and as well as chat and tools. For this reason, most companies rely on consent from their website visitors.

10. GOOGLE ANALYTICS

Google Analytics is at the core of all things related to digital marketing. As the name suggests, this is an analytics service offered by Google that allows brands track and report your website traffic with a variety of different tools. The capabilities of Google Analytics are vast. However, they are conveniently categorised into ABCs: Acquisition, Behaviour, and Conversions.

- Acquisition reports inform you where the traffic to your website comes from. In the acquisition overview, you receive a preview of the data for your top traffic sources by channel; social, organic search, direct, and referral. The overview gives you important information such as the number of sessions acquired, the bounce rate of the acquired visitors, and their conversions for your channels. Acquisition reports are helpful in understanding the success (or possibly room for improvement) of your influencer marketing strategies, or social to driving attention to your website through referral, direct, or related traffic.

- Behaviour reports illuminate what your visitors are doing on your website. These reports help you determine how well the content on your website is performing, as well as help to assess if your visitors are taking the action you want them to take. The behaviour data also provides you with overall page-views, unique page-views, bounce-rate metrics, and average time on a page. The behaviour section of Google Analytics also provides businesses with crucial information around content and how visitors interact with the content on your website.

- Finally, the conversions report helps you understand how many people convert on your website. A conversion occurs when a site visitor completes the action you wanted from them. Tasks counted as conversions could be anything from filling out a survey, subscribing to a newsletter, placing an order, or a high interaction rate with your website - whatever your definition of a "success" was from your call to action.

By analysing the data from your website and social media campaigns, businesses can precisely identify which content performs the best (high interaction rate), how many people they saw it (impressions/reach), and how many people visited their website as a result (click-through rate). Brands can track and react more quickly to early signs of an underperforming campaign and support, push, or adjust as needed. Businesses which implement these strategies effectively have a huge advantage in the noisy, crowded marketplace evolving in the attention economy.

CONCLUSION

Digital marketing is made up of a variety of components, from social media presence to Google Analytics. In order for your business to establish a successful digital marketing strategy, these components should be employed in conjunction with one another, in what is referred to as integrated digital marketing. By integrating multiple marketing strategies to form a cohesive, holistic online approach, your business will penetrate further into the digital economy than ever before.

Every digital marketing strategy has diverse goals tailored to and reflective of the individual nature of each business, yet each and every brand can and must utilise all of these 10 components to create campaigns that will be exponentially influential and successful.

Now that we have taken you through our digital marketing guide, where think your business' digital marketing strategy ranked? And, most importantly, what can you do to make it even better?