

LOG206: E-Business

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Notes

Module 7: Digital marketing

Introduction

Marketing has always been about connecting with your audience in the right place and at the right time. Today, that means that you need to meet them where they are already spending time: on the internet.

Digital marketing

Digital marketing is simply the marketing of products or services using digital channels to reach consumers. In other words, it means achieving marketing objectives through online marketing efforts. The key objective is to promote brands through various forms of digital media. Digital is not just yet another channel for marketing. It requires a new approach to marketing and a new understanding of customer behaviour. For example, it requires companies to analyse and quantify the value of downloads of apps on mobile devices, tweets on Twitter, likes on Facebook and so on.

Regardless of what your company sells, digital marketing still involves building out buyer personas to identify your audience's needs, and creating valuable online content. However, that's not to say that all businesses should implement a digital marketing strategy in the same way. For instance, if your company is 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 that reason, the role of your marketing strategy is to attract and convert the highest quality leads for your salespeople via your website and supporting digital channels. Thus, beyond your website, you'll probably choose to focus your efforts on business-focused channels like LinkedIn where your demographic is spending their time online. On the other hand, if your company is 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 that reason, you're probably less likely to focus on 'leads' in their 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 that they make a purchase. For B2C companies, channels like Instagram and Pinterest can often be more valuable than business-focused platforms LinkedIn.

Benefits of Digital Marketing

1. **You can target a local audience, but also an international one.** Further, you can tailor a campaign to specific audience demographics, such as gender, location, age and interests. This means your campaign will be more effective.
2. **Your audience can choose how they want to receive your content.** While one person likes to read a blog post, another person likes to watch a YouTube video. Traditional marketing doesn't give the audience a choice. Online people get the choice to opt in or out of communications and often it is relevant because they were the ones searching for it in the first place.

3. **Interaction with your audience is possible with the use of social media networks.** You can encourage your prospects, clients and followers to take action, visit your website, read about your products and services, rate them, buy them and provide feedback which is visible to your market.
4. **Digital marketing is cost-efficient.** Though some invest on paid ads online; however, the cost is still cheaper compared to traditional marketing.
5. **Data and results are easily recorded.** With Google Analytics and the insights tools offered by most social media channels, you can check on your campaigns at any time.
6. **Level playing field.** Any business can compete with any competitor regardless of size with a solid digital marketing strategy. Online, a crisp well thought out site with a smooth customer journey and fantastic service is king – not size.
7. **Real time results.** You can see the numbers of visitors to your site and its subscribers increase, peak trading times, conversion rates and much more at the touch of a button.
8. **Brand Development.** A well maintained website with quality content targeting the needs and adding value to your target audience can provide significant value and lead generation opportunities. The same can be said for utilising social media channels and personalised email marketing.
9. **Viral.** Online, using social media share buttons on your website, email and social media channels enables your message to be shared incredibly quickly. If you consider the average Facebook user has 190 friends of which an average of 12% see their liked posts – your one message has actually been seen by 15 new prospects. Now imagine a number of them also like and share your message and their friends do the same?

Inbound marketing

Inbound marketing is focused on attracting customers through relevant and helpful content and adding value at every stage in your customer's buying journey. With inbound marketing, potential customers find you through channels like blogs, search engines, and social media. This is a new approach to marketing whereby companies are leveraging consumers' proactive behavior in seeking out information for their needs. It involves targeting potential customers through the internet. Inbound Marketing is based on the premise of making it easy for your target audience to find you.

Inbound marketing classifies potential customers, discovers their preferred content delivery mode and digital hangouts and then builds a marketing strategy aimed at that specific group. It is powered by buyer persona, a model of the ideal customer derived from that customer's demographics, age, race, preferred websites, blogs or video channels and other similar information. Companies use this information to promote their products and deliver marketing messages to right type of person in a place they are most likely to see it.

With inbound marketing, interactions with brands are attracted through: content, search, social media. The three pull mechanisms of inbound marketing (content, search and social media) give rise to three approaches to inbound marketing: **content marketing**, **search marketing**, **social media marketing**.

Content marketing

Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience — and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action. Regardless of what type of marketing tactics you use, content marketing should be part of your process. Quality content is part of all forms of digital marketing. The following are the characteristics of great content:

1. **Visual.** People are thinking visually. How can your small business or nonprofit develop visual content that resonates with prospects and further engages current clients? Make your content visual— think infographics, behind-the-scenes photos, and relevant workplace snapshots. Infographics are graphic visual representations of information, data or knowledge intended to present complex information quickly and clearly.
2. **Shareable.** The beauty of online marketing content and the explosive growth of social media is that people can easily share information with their clients, colleagues, friends and family. In many ways, this makes content sharing the online equivalent of word-of-mouth marketing—or should we say "word-of-mouse"? Businesses, nonprofits and individuals need to include share buttons on their blogs and other relevant online content so interested audiences can share the information they find remarkable with other like-minded consumers.
3. **Timely.** It is a lot easier to sell an automatic car starter in the middle of a chilly, snowy winter than it is on a warm and sunny summer day. Look for opportunities to tie your content in with timely trends—holiday shopping, tax season, hunger action month, etc.—to increase people's receptivity to the information you provide.
4. **Credible.** Attribution is key to building an online community. If you share a great statistic, acknowledge not only the source of the data, but the person or organization from whom you obtained it. Whether the research is third-party or proprietary, good data is important to developing credible online content.
5. **Unique.** With many organizations keeping their antennae up for timely marketing opportunities, the importance of giving your content a unique twist cannot be understated. Give people content that is worth consuming and sharing. Develop content that sets itself apart from the competition and clearly demonstrates the organization's unique value proposition.
6. **Fun.** It sounds a bit absurd when you think about more serious topics (such as the dreaded audit), but when you execute it correctly, marketing that is fun can make a big splash.
7. **Emotional.** Be it laughing, crying, smiling, smirking or shaking their heads, you want people to react to your content. It's part of what makes it memorable. Look for ways to evoke an appropriate emotional response from your target audiences to strengthen their connection to both your content and your brand.
8. **Interactive.** The rise of gamification is singlehandedly making the case for interactive online marketing content. While it may not be the best use of your resources to create the next Angry Birds, there are ways to apply gaming and reward principles to online content and further engage your audiences.

9. **Relevant.** In addition to being timely, great content needs to be relevant to an organization's target buyer persona(s). Understanding what makes clients tick and what ultimately convinces them to donate or buy is key to creating content that moves the needle. Develop content that is timely and relevant for optimal success.

What Kind of Content Should I Be Creating?

The kind of content you create depends on your audience's needs at different stages in the buyer's journey. You should start by creating buyer personas (try makemypersona.com) to identify what your audience's goals and challenges are in relation to your business. On a basic level, your online content should aim to help them meet these goals, and overcome their challenges. Then, you'll need to think about when they're most likely to be ready to consume this content in relation to what stage they're at in their buyer's journey. This is called content mapping. With content mapping, the goal is to target content according to the characteristics of the person who will be consuming and how close that person is to making a purchase (i.e., their lifecycle stage). Here are some recommended options using at each stage of the buyer's journey:

Awareness stage (introducing your business to potential customers)

- Blog posts. Great for increasing your organic traffic when paired with a strong SEO and keyword strategy.
- Infographics. Very shareable, meaning they increase your chances of being found via social media when others share your content. (Check out these [free infographic templates](#) to get you started.)
- Short videos. Again, these are very shareable and can help your brand get found by new audiences by hosting them on platforms like YouTube.

Consideration stage (when potential customers evaluate your business and its products)

- Ebooks. Great for lead generation as they're generally more comprehensive than a blog post or infographic, meaning someone is more likely to exchange their contact information to receive it.
- Research reports. Again, this is a high value content piece which is great for lead generation. Research reports and new data for your industry can also work for the awareness stage though, as they're often picked-up by the media or industry press.
- Webinars. Interactive form of video content, webinars are an effective consideration stage content format as they offer more comprehensive content than a blog post or short video.

Decision Stage (when potential customers are about to make up their minds)

- Case studies. Having detailed case studies on your website can be an effective form of content for those who are ready to make a purchasing decision, as it helps you positively influence their decision.
- Testimonials. If case studies aren't a good fit for your business, having short testimonials around your website is a good alternative. If you're a clothing brand, these might take the form of photos of how other people styled a shirt or dress, pulled from a branded hashtag where people can contribute.

Search marketing

Search marketing is a marketing approach that involves gaining traffic and visibility from search engines through both paid and unpaid efforts. Originally called “search engine marketing,” the shorter phrase “search marketing” is now often used as the umbrella term over Search engine optimization (SEO) and Search Engine Marketing (SEM).

Search Engine Marketing

Search Engine Marketing is the process of gaining website traffic by purchasing ads on search engines. Ex: Google AdWords. Some of the most common terms also used to refer to SEM activities include Paid search ads, Paid search advertising, and PPC (pay-per-click). With search engine marketing, you pay to play on the search engine results pages (SERPs). Essentially, you pay to show your ads to users who are actively searching for the keywords you’re targeting. You don’t need a high site authority in order to be able to show up on the first page of Google when you’re willing to pay for it. Most search engines have an ad platform for search engine marketing. The most well-known (and effective) platform to use is Google AdWords. Bing Ads and Yahoo Search Ads are also both SEM platforms that you can use. It’s important to note that—while all SEM platforms utilize a pay-per-click (PPC) advertising model—not all PPC is SEM.

Facebook Ads and other social media ad platforms, for example, are pay-per-click platforms that do not fall under the SEM category. Instead of showing your ads to people who are searching for similar content like search ads do, social media sites introduce your product to people who happen to be just browsing through their feeds. These are two very, very different types of online advertising. Text ads can also be displayed on third party sites to form a ‘content network’ such as Google Adsense or Content Match on Yahoo!

Search engine optimization

Search engine optimization is focused on improving your site in order to increase your organic search engine rankings. SEO primarily revolves around placing keywords strategically throughout the site, link building, establishing site authority and using meta data that’s crawlable by Google. It is the process of getting traffic through “free,”/“organic,”/“natural” search results on search engines therefore payment isn’t involved, as it is with paid search ads. A structured approach is used to increase the position of a company or its products in search-engine natural or organic results listings for selected key phrases (see slides for some key approaches for SEO).

Do I need Both SEM and SEO?

Do you absolutely need both SEM and SEO? No. But will you end up getting a lot more leads and sales if you implement both? Absolutely yes. It’s always a good idea to optimize your site according to SEO best practices. You want to lay out a solid foundation that will put you as far up in the SERPs organically as possible. After all, SEO clicks are basically free—why wouldn’t you want as many of those as you can get?

Utilizing search engine marketing, however, can significantly speed up your ability to build your brand and your client base. It will put you in front of target audiences who are actively

searching for products, services, and brands just like yours. You want to appear at the very top of their searches, or someone else will get their sale.

Do keywords matter for SEM?

Keywords are everything for SEM, just as they are for SEO. When you run SEM campaigns, you choose keywords that determine which ads will show up on which searches. As a result, in-depth keyword research is the key to running a successful search engine marketing campaign. You'll want to run your campaigns targeting the exact right terms...or you'll miss your target audience.

Social media marketing

The rise of social media is changing the nature of marketing and challenges traditional marketing thinking.

Sponsored social posts

If you're already writing brilliant content that shows off what your brand is all about, paying to promote posts can get those posts into the news feeds of people who aren't following you - yet. If you happen to be active on the lesser-used Google+ (which all companies should be, as it boosts search ranking), its sponsored +Post ads let you embed a call-to-action, like a Buy Now button. Here's how you can target your audience on different networks:

- Facebook - interests they've marked
- Twitter - user networks
- LinkedIn - job description

How to do it?

- Choose the social network where your buyer personas are, and always optimise and test your content
- You may want to create a post around a new offer or simply word it to attract users to your page.
- Do a 'dry run' - try out your offer or call to action as an ordinary post and see what style and wording attracts the most likes, shares and comments before putting money behind them.
- Start with simple image or video posts and track how many clicks and follows you get, before moving into the more complex and expensive formats, like multi-image carousel or canvas ads. Check out Canva's post for nondesigners on creating beautiful social images.

E-mail marketing

Email marketing is a form of direct marketing that uses electronic mail as a means of communicating commercial or fundraising messages to an audience. In its broadest sense, every email sent to a potential or current customer could be considered email marketing.

However, the term is usually used to refer to:

- Sending emails with the purpose of enhancing the relationship of a merchant with its current or previous customers and to encourage customer loyalty and repeat business.

- Sending emails with the purpose of acquiring new customers or convincing current customers to purchase something immediately.
- Adding advertisements to emails sent by other companies to their customers.

Why email marketing?

- Cost – Email marketing is CHEAP, there are no two ways about it. Whether you do it yourself, or through an email marketing agency, marketing to hundreds of consumers via email is cheaper compared to other channels of advertising.
- Success – Emails can be targeting specifically to the ideal consumer. With this concept in mind, along with email cost-effectiveness, it's no wonder that email marketing's return on investment ROI often blows other direct marketing strategies out of the water, but you have to get it right.
- Measureability and Flexibility – With the analytics available today it's easy to track responses to your emails exactly, in order to work out what parts of your campaign are working and what parts aren't. With this knowledge, you can then react instantly to modify your campaign strategy if need be.

Success factors of email marketing

- Creative – Consider the overall design of the email (layout/images/colour).
- Relevance – Targeting, targeting, and more targeting. Make your emails relevant and personalised to each recipient if you want that response rate to rise.
- Incentive – There's no such thing as a free lunch right? Well... Offer the recipient a "free lunch" for participating and they will be more likely to respond.
- Timing – Don't send out an email that recipients will receive overnight, let it pop up in their inbox during their working day. This also expands to selecting certain days, months and even years. Test and measure what timing works best for which email.
- Integration – Nest marketing practices utilise integrated marketing communication (IMC) where all aspects of their promotion work together to create a whole. Your emails must carry the same image and message as your entire operations. Even the timing of the campaign must work in with other aspects of your marketing mix.
- Copy – When considering the copywriting for your email you must consider all aspects of the language, from subject line through to your mail signature. With emails, not all links should be saved for the last sentence, pop them in early to grab that impulsive customer!
- Attributes – Attributes include the subject line, from address, to address, date/time of receipt and format. Testing your campaigns can rule out the attributes that customers consider spam and highlighting the attributes that will work best for your business. See on the slides on how to create successful marketing emails.
- Landing Page – Want those emails to turn into sales conversions? Don't just hyperlink your customers to your home page; show them exactly where you want them to go and make it quick and easy to complete any forms.

Online partnerships

Partnerships are an important part of today's marketing mix. Three key types of online partnerships which need to be managed: link building, affiliate marketing and online sponsorship.

Link building

Simple link exchanges and "webrings" have long been used among related sites to mutually boost their Web traffic. Link exchanges between related sites help attract customers who are simply browsing, following one interesting link after another. They also help snag those who are searching for something in particular. A potential customer may find one of your partner sites through a search engine, then follow a link to your own site. A webring is simply a more organized form of link exchange, where a group of related sites band together and organize the links among themselves so that visitors can click from one to the next, eventually (if they're patient enough) following an unbroken chain of links that encompasses the whole set of sites.

Affiliate marketing

A commission-based arrangement where an e-retailer pays sites that link to it for sales, leads (CPA-based) or less commonly (CPC-based). Affiliate marketing is an online sales tactic that lets a product owner increase sales by allowing others targeting the same audience – “affiliates” – to earn a commission by recommending the product to others. At the same time, it makes it possible for affiliates to earn money on product sales without creating products of their own. The cost to the customer purchasing the product or service through an affiliate is the same as buying directly from the product owner. While product owners make less money per sale because they must pay a percentage of the sale to the affiliate, they are also reaching potential customers they probably wouldn't reach on their own. Affiliates can earn commissions on a one-time purchase or recurring income through sales of subscriptions or membership programs.

Online sponsorship

Digital sponsorship is becoming popular due to it is attractive medium and interactive and dynamic nature. It allows rich media such as video streaming and personalisation technologies. These attributes make it possible for sponsors to target their market more effectively, heighten involvement of their target audience, and measure the effectiveness of their sponsorship activities.

The benefits of online sponsorship when done right are many and the return on investment can be great. Similar to offline sponsorship, brand awareness is improved within a select target audience and the relationship with consumers can become more dynamic. There is also a benefit in building long term relationships and that these relationships often last longer than the initial project. In a more digital marketing approach sponsorship is really good way of building inbound links which will ultimately help search engine page ranks.

Online PR

Online PR involves maximizing favourable mentions of your company, brands, products or web sites on third-party web sites which are likely to be visited by your target audience and Minimizing unfavourable mentions through online reputation management is also an aspect of online PR. It is closely associated with improving results from many of the other digital marketing communications techniques in particular social media, SEO (link-building), partnership marketing and viral marketing / word-of-mouth marketing. Activities which can be considered to be online PR include the following:

- Communicating with media online. It involves using the Internet as a new channel to disseminate press releases (SEO-optimized) through e-mail and on-site and on third-party sites. Options to consider for a company include: setting up a press-release area on the web site, creating e-mail alerts about news that journalists and other third parties can sign up to, and submitting your news stories or releases to online news feeds.
- Managing how your brand is presented on third-party sites. It is important to set up monitoring services that track on how your brand is presented on other sites. It is also necessary to have the resources to deal with negative PR as part of online reputation management. Examples of alerting service include: Google Alerts, Giga Alert
- Creating a buzz – online viral marketing. A marketing strategy that focuses on spreading information and opinions about a product or service from person to person, especially by using unconventional means such as the Internet or email.

NOTE: All the digital marketing activities discussed above—content marketing, search engine marketing, search engine optimization, social media marketing, e-mail marketing, online partnerships, and online PR—are key to online customer acquisition. That is, they can be used to gaining new customers. The figure below summarises the key tactics for customer acquisition.

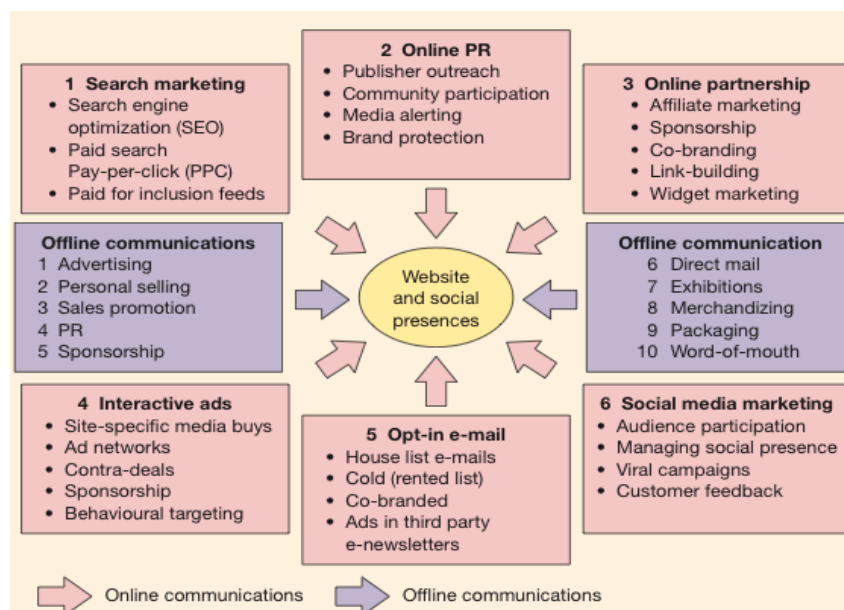


Figure 1: key tactics for customer acquisition