

# DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY

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# DIGITAL MARKETING

**D**igital media is so pervasive that consumers have access to information any time and any place they want it. Gone are the days when the messages people got about your products or services came from you and consisted of only what you wanted them to know. Digital media is an ever-growing source of entertainment, news, shopping and social interaction, and consumers are now exposed not just to what your company says about your brand, but what the media, friends, relatives, peers, etc., are saying as well. And they are more likely to believe them than you. People want brands they can trust, companies that know them, communications that are personalized and relevant, and offers tailored to their needs and preferences.

Digital marketing, the promotion of products or brands via one or more forms of electronic media, differs from traditional marketing in that it uses channels and methods that enable an organization to analyze marketing campaigns and understand what is working and what isn't – typically in real time.

Digital marketers monitor things like what is being viewed, how often and for how long, sales conversions, what content works and doesn't work, etc. While the Internet is, perhaps, the channel most closely associated with digital marketing, others include wireless text messaging, mobile instant messaging, mobile apps, podcasts, electronic billboards, digital television and radio channels, etc.

## Explanation

Digital Marketing uses rich content media, including text, video, graphics, and augmented reality (AR) to emphasize the importance of integrating digital strategy and tactics with values to achieve organization wide digital transformation. Bringing the reader through its five-step Path to Digital Integration (Mindset, Model, Strategy, Implementation, and Sustainability)

**Digital Marketing** seeks to:

- Outline the key drivers of change and leading digital marketing trends executives need to understand and incorporate to drive business opportunity.
- Evaluate the digital channels and technologies management teams can leverage to execute a successful *Integrated Digital Marketing* strategy. This includes insight into the latest digital tactics (website, social, mobile, search, content, and email marketing; data analytics) and social tools (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, and Google Plus).
- Discover the impact of digital transformation on the organization, from the effect of digital tactics on the customer experience (CX) to the value of integrating internal digital strategies to facilitate collaboration and innovation.
- Guide aspiring leaders on how to combine core values and business goals with progressive digital strategies, tactics, and tools to generate sustainable outcomes for all stakeholders.

## What is Digital Strategy?

Your digital marketing strategy is the series of actions that are going to help you achieve your goal(s) using online marketing. The term ‘strategy’ might seem intimidating, but building an effective digital strategy doesn’t need to be difficult.

In simple terms, a strategy is just a plan of action to achieve a desired goal, or multiple goals. For example, your overarching goal might be to generate 25% more leads via your website this year than you drove last year.

Depending on the scale of your business, your digital marketing strategy might involve multiple goals and a lot of moving parts, but coming back to this simple way of thinking about strategy can help you stay focused on meeting those objectives.

Despite our simplification of the term ‘strategy’, there’s no doubt it can be difficult to get started actually building one. Let’s see what a digital marketing campaign looks like, and then, we’ll jump into those seven building blocks to help you create an effective digital marketing strategy to set up your business for online success.

## What is a Digital Marketing Campaign?

It’s easy to confuse your digital strategy with your digital marketing campaigns, but here’s how to distinguish the two.

As we've already outlined, your digital strategy is the series of actions you take to help you achieve your overarching marketing goal. Your digital marketing campaigns are the building blocks or actions within your strategy that move you toward meeting that goal.

For example, you might decide to run a campaign sharing some of your best-performing gated content on Twitter, to generate more leads through that channel. That campaign is part of your strategy to generate more leads.

It's important to note that even if a campaign runs over the course of a couple of years, it doesn't make it a strategy -- it's still a tactic that sits alongside other campaigns to form your strategy.

Now that we've gotten to grips with the basics of digital strategy and digital marketing campaigns, let's dig into how to build your strategy.

## How to Build a Comprehensive Digital Strategy

### 1) Build your buyer personas.

For any marketing strategy -- offline or online -- you need to know who you're marketing to. The best digital marketing strategies are built upon detailed buyer personas, and your first step is to create them.

Buyer personas represent your ideal customer(s) and can be created by researching, surveying, and interviewing your business's target audience. It's important to note that this information should be based upon real data wherever possible, as making assumptions about your audience can cause your marketing strategy to take the wrong direction.

To get a rounded picture of your persona, your research pool should include a mixture of customers, prospects, and people outside your contacts database who align with your target audience.

But what kind of information should you gather for your own buyer persona(s) to inform your digital marketing strategy? That depends on your businesses, and is likely to vary depending on whether you're B2B or B2C, or whether your product is high cost or low cost. Here are some starting points, but you'll want to fine-tune them, depending on your particular business.

## Quantitative (or Demographic) Information

- **Location.** You can use web analytics tools like Google Analytics to easily identify what location your website traffic is coming from.
- **Age.** Depending on your business, this may or may not be relevant. It's best to gather this data by identifying trends in your existing prospect and customer database.
- **Income.** It's best to gather sensitive information like personal income in persona research interviews, as people might be unwilling to share it via online forms.
- **Job Title.** This is something you can get a rough idea of from your existing customer base, and is most relevant for B2B companies.

## Qualitative (or Psychographic) Information

- **Goals.** Depending on the need your product or service was created to serve, you might already have a good idea of what goals your persona is looking to achieve. However, it's best to cement your assumptions by speaking to customers, as well as internal sales and customer service representatives.
- **Challenges.** Again, speak to customers, sales and customer service representatives to get an idea of the common problems your audience faces.
- **Hobbies and interests.** Speak to customers and people who align with your target audience. If you're a fashion brand, for example, it's helpful to know if large segments of your audience are also interested in fitness and well-being, as that can help inform your future content creation and partnerships.
- **Priorities.** Speak to customers and people who align with your target audience to find out what's most important to them in relation to your business. For example, if you're a B2B software company, knowing that your audience values customer support over a competitive price point is very valuable information.

## 2) Identify your goals & the digital marketing tools you' ll need.

Your marketing goals should always be tied back to the fundamental goals of the business. For example, if your business's goal is to increase online revenue by 20%, your goal as a marketer might be to generate 50% more leads via the website than you did last year to contribute towards that success.

Whatever your overarching goal is, you need to know how to measure it, and more important, actually be able to measure it (e.g., have the right digital marketing tools in place

to do so). How you measure the effectiveness of your digital strategy will be different for each business and dependent on your goal(s), but it's vital to ensure you're able to do so, as it's these metrics which will help you adjust your strategy in the future.

If you're a HubSpot customer, the Reporting add-on in your HubSpot software brings all of your marketing and sales data into one place, so you can quickly determine what works and what doesn't.

### **3) Evaluate your existing digital marketing channels and assets.**

When considering your available digital marketing channels or assets to incorporate into your strategy, it's helpful to first consider the bigger picture to avoid getting overwhelmed. The owned, earned, and paid media framework helps to categorize the digital 'vehicles', assets, or channels that you're already using.

#### **Owned Media**

This refers to the digital assets that your brand or company owns -- whether that's your website, social media profiles, blog content, or imagery, owned channels are the things your business has complete control over. This can include some off-site content that you own, but isn't hosted on your website, like a blog that you publish on Medium, for example.

#### **Earned Media**

Quite simply, earned media refers to the exposure you've earned through word-of-mouth. Whether that's content you've distributed on other websites (e.g., guest posts), PR work you've been doing, or the customer experience you've delivered, earned media is the recognition you receive as a result. You can earn media by getting press mentions, positive reviews, and by other people sharing your content on social media, for instance.

#### **Paid Media**

Paid media is a bit self-explanatory in what its name suggests -- and refers to any vehicle or channel that you spend money on to catch the attention of your buyer personas. This includes things like Google AdWords, paid social media posts, native advertising (like sponsored posts on other websites), and any other medium for which you directly pay in exchange for visibility.

Gather what you have, and categorize each vehicle or asset in a spreadsheet, so you have a clear picture of your existing owned, earned, and paid media.

Your digital marketing strategy might incorporate elements of all three channels; all working together to help you reach your goal. For example, you might have an owned piece of content on a landing page on your website that's been created to help you generate leads. To amplify the number of leads that content generates, you might have made a real effort to make it shareable, meaning others are distributing it via their personal social media profiles, increasing traffic to the landing page. That's the earned media component. To support the content's success, you might have posted about the content to your Facebook page and have paid to have it seen by more people in your target audience.

That's exactly how the three can work together to help you meet your goal. Of course, it's not compulsory to use all three. If your owned and earned media are both successful, you might not need to invest in paid. It's all about evaluating the best solution to meet your goal, and then incorporating the channels that work best for your business into your digital marketing strategy.

Now you know what's already being used, you can start to think about what to keep and what to cut.

#### **4) Audit and plan your owned media.**

At the heart of digital marketing is your owned media, which pretty much always takes the form of content. Every message your brand broadcasts can generally be classified as content, whether it's your 'About Us' page, your product descriptions, blog posts, ebooks, infographics, or social media posts. Content helps convert your website visitors into leads and customers, and helps to raise your brand's profile online -- and when it's optimized, it can also boost any efforts you have around search/organic traffic. Whatever your goal, you're going to need to use owned content to form your digital marketing strategy.

To build your digital marketing strategy, you need to decide what content is going to help you reach your goals. If your goal is to generate 50% more leads via the website than you did last year, it's unlikely that your 'About Us' page is going to be included in your strategy - unless that page has somehow been a lead generation machine in the past.

It might more likely that an ebook gated by a form on your website drives far more leads, and as a result, that might be something you want to do more of. Here's a brief process to follow to work out what owned content you need to meet your digital marketing goals:



## 5) Audit and plan your earned media.

Evaluating your previous earned media against your current goals can help you get an idea of where to focus your time. Look at where your traffic and leads are coming from (if that's your goal) and rank each earned media source from most effective to least effective.

You can get this information from tools like Google Analytics, or the Sources Reports in your HubSpot software.

You might find that a particular article you contributed to the industry press drove a lot of qualified traffic to your website, which in turn converted really well. Or, you might discover that LinkedIn is where you see most people sharing your content, which in turn drives a lot of traffic. The idea here is to build up a picture of what earned media will help you reach your goals, and what won't, based on historical data. However, if there's something new you want to try, don't rule that out just because it's not yet tried and tested.

## 6) Audit and plan your paid media.

This process involves much of the same process: You need to evaluate your existing paid media across each platform (e.g., Google AdWords, Facebook, Twitter, etc.) to figure out what's likely to help you meet your current goals.

If you've been spending a lot of money on AdWords and haven't seen the results you'd hoped for, maybe it's time to refine your approach, or scrap it altogether and focus on another platform that seems to be yielding better results.

By the end of the process, you should have a clear idea of which paid media platforms you want to continue using, and which (if any) you'd like to remove from your strategy.

## Your Path to Digital Marketing Strategy Success

Your strategy document will be very individual to your business, which is why it's almost impossible for us to create a one-size-fits-all digital marketing strategy template. Remember, the purpose of your strategy document is to map out the actions you're going to take to achieve your goal over a period of time -- as long as it communicates that, and then you've nailed the basics of creating a digital strategy.

## A) Challenges facing digital marketers

- Proliferation of digital channels. Consumers use multiple digital channels and a variety of devices that use different protocols, specifications and interfaces – and they interact with those devices in different ways and for different purposes.
- Intensifying competition. Digital channels are relatively cheap, compared with traditional media, making them within reach of practically every business of every size. As a result, it's becoming a lot harder to capture consumers' attention.
- Exploding data volumes. Consumers leave behind a huge trail of data in digital channels. It's extremely difficult to get a handle on all that data, as well as find the right data within exploding data volumes that can help you make the right decisions.

## B) Three keys to Digital Marketing Success

What does it take to do digital marketing right? Here are three keys to digital marketing success:

1. Manage complex customer relationships across a variety of channels – both digital and traditional.
2. Respond to and initiate dynamic customer interactions.
3. Extract value from big data to make better decisions faster.

## Effective Ways to Measure Your Digital Marketing Strategy

Digital marketing strategies seem to change with the seasons. Businesses focus on keeping up with these changes and, as a result, measurement is often left on the back burner.

Relevance is the key to any digital marketing strategy. To remain relevant, a brand must adopt the latest digital marketing strategies to appeal to consumers. Strategies such as content marketing, influencer marketing, and online advertising change based on current digital trends.

More importantly, brands that strive for relevance are tempted to leverage the latest tool – simply because it is new. A brand should take a step back before making a decision to leverage a new digital marketing tool or join a new platform. It's important to review if the type of engagement on that platform is aligned with the overall business goal.

Before going down that rabbit hole, review how to measure your digital marketing strategy. Simply put, if you effectively measure your digital marketing efforts, you won't have to consider leveraging any new tools.

Your measurements will automatically reveal the proper plan of action.

## 1. Define Your Business Goals

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Before going gangbusters on a new digital strategy that will catapult your brand to new heights, your business goals need to be defined.

Consider what success means to your business:

- Is it to raise awareness or increase revenues?
- Is it to increase customer retention or acquire new customers?

Remember, measure your digital marketing strategy to ensure it's aligned with your business goals.

## 2. Describe Your Customer Segments

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It's easier to talk to someone if you know all about them. You understand what motivates them. You may even glean their disposition. But it's more difficult to communicate when you don't know your customers.

This applies to all aspects of the personal and professional relationships we maintain.

With your business in mind, understanding customers is certainly a success factor. To effectively target them in your digital campaigns, go one step further and understand the segments within your customer base.

More than likely, your customer base is diverse so it is important to describe each segment so you can create digital content that resonates.

Understanding your customers' challenges will allow you to create highly relevant communications that will move them to action.

Build your measurement strategy around the challenges of each one.

### 3. Understand Your Customer Journey

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If you've ever gone car shopping then you're familiar with the sales reps saying: "What brings you in today?". This is a qualifying question asked to understand your purchase intention. Then there are more follow-up questions asked as well.

All of this is done to better understand what brought you to that dealership and what challenges you've had with your vehicle search.

For your business, it is important to understand how each customer segment engages with you.

Do they research first on a mobile device? Do they consult a friend or colleague? Did they engage with your brand on social media?

Be sure to get a deeper understanding for your customer's path to purchase and how it may differ for each segment.

### 4. Map Your Business Objectives to KPIs

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Before connecting business objectives to KPIs, ask yourself what KPIs are needed to measure your customer's interactions with your brand.

Mapping your business objectives to your digital KPIs are important when measuring your strategy.

You must consider, however, that not all KPIs make sense for each channel. For example, bounce rate is unimportant for mobile but more important for your website.

## 5. Establish Your Reporting

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Determine the best way to report your digital marketing strategy to your business stakeholders. For stakeholders with less digital experience, consider reporting the overarching contribution of your digital efforts.

For those whom are well versed in digital, I would include reporting KPIs down to the platform and post level (i.e. Twitter > tweet).

Ensuring that the reporting is aligned with the business goals defined in step is what should be displayed in your reporting.

### Most effective digital marketing tactics and techniques

- Content Marketing
- Search Marketing
- Social Media Marketing
- Email Marketing
- PPC & Paid Advertising
- Marketing Automation
- Online PR
- Affiliate Marketing

## Companies with the Best Digital Marketing Campaigns

In the ever changing landscape of digital marketing it can be hard to truly examine what works and more importantly what doesn't. In our opinion, a great place to start is by looking at the brands at the forefront of the digital marketing world and analyzes what worked for them. There is no need to reinvent the wheel.

However, there is a lot of misinformation and poorly executed digital marketing strategies out there, so when wanted to provide you with the companies we see doing digital marketing well.

It can be hard, but not impossible, to execute a digital marketing strategy that connects with your customer, increases your brand awareness, and adds money to your bottom line.

So, to help you get started, we've put together a list of the top 12 companies we believe have implemented a dynamic digital marketing strategy that increased company ROI and added value to customers.

The companies below are not just doing digital marketing – they are creating experiences and content that captivates their audiences and brings outstanding brand awareness. They are the best.

We have also added a bonus section at the bottom of this post of four companies that are absolutely killing the social media world. Social media campaigns are part of digital marketing, of course, but these brands are doing such an impressive job that we had to spotlight them.

Seeing is believing, so without further ado, here are our favorite twelve companies that are doing digital marketing right, and four social superstar companions.

### Best Examples of Online Marketing Campaigns

#### 1 - Zappos

Zappos, a leader in online shoe commerce, sets the gold standard for online customer care. In fact, their CEO wrote the book on it. So it's no shock that they have a stellar digital strategy.

Not only does Zappos provide a 365-day money back guarantee, but they also have free shipping both ways as well, should consumers decide to return or exchange products purchased on the site.

As a result, Zappos doesn't have to work hard to market its online presence – its policies are so appealing to consumers that shoppers are eager to sing the company's praises to one another in a completely organic (and viral) fashion.

Of course, Zappos does still invest heavily in online marketing, and its social media campaigns shouldn't be missed! Notice how they focus on what the customer wants and needs, not on what they want the customer to want or need. This is a key part to any effective digital strategy. Listen to your audience and plan accordingly.

**The Lesson:** Content marketing is the way of the future, but it must be managed appropriately to be effective. Online content marketing campaigns should strive to produce measurable results in proportion to the resources committed to them.

## **2 - American Express (AMEX)**

Plenty of companies talk a big game about “the communities” they're creating online and the inherent value of the “online conversation.” However, very few actually create any community of value.

Far from being all talk and no game, American Express puts its money where its mouth is by leveraging the value provided by industry experts on its Open Forum website.

Open Forum is a collaborative website, on which American Express invites guest authors from a variety of sectors to share their business knowledge and wisdom. The result is a content-rich mega-site that's popular with the search engines – all created without American Express needing to shell out cash to content contributors.

**The Lesson:** The creator of your content does not need to be you. Find industry leaders that produce great content and ask them to write a couple articles on your blog. It will build their audience and your traffic, as long as the content provides value. Good content marketing strategies draw on a range of user-generated sources to both grow online communities and minimize financial investment.

## **4 - Uber**

The company started in 2009, but it feels like they've always been around. Their service is built upon a luxury that most of us dream of, but few can afford: a private driver. Tap a few buttons on the app and in a matter of minutes, a shiny new car arrives at your exact location to take you anywhere you want to go. The service is so great that the need for expensive marketing is practically non-existent.

Uber grew almost entirely through word-of-mouth marketing, which is a very high converting channel. In fact, according to Nielsen, 84% of customers make purchase decisions based on recommendations from their friends.

They offer incentives for riders to act as advocates for the business by providing referral codes to their friends in exchange for free rides. Between a service that saves people time by making transportation easier and cost-effective and their powerful referral system, Uber spread like wildfire.

## 5 - Mastercard

Mastercard is the king of 'Priceless' surprises. The financial services giant has a knack for creating engaging experiences that excite and retain their customers.

As a major sponsor of the MLB, the company wanted to execute their priceless strategy and take advantage of the Chicago Cubs making the World Series for the first time in 71 years. Why? So they could be a part of history if (and when) the Cubs won.

Their main objectives of implementing the campaign were to (1) connect with suffering Cubs fans and (2) insert themselves into the World Series conversation.

Mastercard went out looking for the perfect way to implement their campaign and came across a great piece of content: A player on a rival team had accused Cubs fans of lacking passion for their team. This was a perfect sound bite to build an entire campaign on, so Mastercard ran with it, titling their campaign the 'Sound of Priceless.'

Then they built a sound meter and placed it around Wrigley Field to measure just how loud the fans were. After measuring the sound, and noticing how loud the fans truly were, they created a piece of video content around the story.

In order to create the ultimate impact, Mastercard released the film online and on social media just as the Cubs won the final game of the World Series. The results were priceless.

**The Lesson:** When you are trying to create viral digital marketing campaigns, look for content that is already out there and try to create a spin on it that will benefit someone else as well as your brand. Also, notice how Mastercard was patient enough to wait until the very last game to release their content in order to maximize the reach. This is key to any great digital campaign. Timing does matter.