400+
ESSENTIAL
DIGITAL
MARKETING TIPS

DIGITAL MARKETING

SEO | PPC | SOCIAL MEDIA | CONTENT |
ANALYTICS | BRANDING | EMAIL

MIKE NCUBE

400+ Essential Digital Marketing Tips for Your Business

SEO | PPC | Social Media | Content | Analytics | Branding | Email

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Introduction

In 'Digital Marketing Tips,' you get all the top tips and techniques to help you create, manage, implement and monitor your digital marketing campaigns effectively. Whether you are an online retailer, local service business, e-commerce site or personal brand looking for online exposure and more sales, you've got it all here.

Digital marketing strategies include all the online activities that you do to meet your customers' needs and achieve your marketing objectives. Customers should be at the centre of everything you do as a business, and you ought to begin by researching your target markets and then developing the tactics that will help you achieve your goals.

So that means, you should create customer segments and then choose the most viable ones for your business, and target them with your products, services or offers. It's important that you choose the right customer segments because few businesses can meet all the needs of all customers in the market – due to resource constraints.

My hope is that you find these digital marketing tips helpful for your business whether you are completely new to digital marketing or have many years of creating and managing online campaigns.

Mike Ncube

Digital Marketer

Search Engine Optimisation

Target long tail keywords

Long tail keywords are 3 or more keyword phrases that drive quality traffic to your site. They are not as competitive as 'head' keywords that have high traffic volumes individually but have many competitors too. Another benefit of long tail keywords is that collectively, they represent about 80% of search volume on Google – so there is huge potential here.

Targeting long tail keywords is not always easy but it's possible to achieve if you research your keywords and their variations and then create quality content for these keywords. So, aim to have full-length content on each page that targets as many keywords as possible without keyword stuffing.

If you aim for at least 300-500 words per page that will usually suffice to target your main keywords and a host of long tail keywords that your landing pages will rank for in the search engines.

Use Google+ to boost SEO

Google+ is Google's social networking platform and has many benefits for your SEO marketing plan including:

- More exposure on search results

- Connecting with customers and followers

- Collecting reviews for your services

- Boosts local search rankings

Creating your Google+ is easy and if you already have a Google account through other services like Gmail, Google Adwords, YouTube, Analytics and others, you can use the same login details to create your Google+ account.

Link building

Links are one of the biggest factors to your rankings on Google. Your SEO marketing plan should include details of how you will acquire backlinks, how many you need compared to your competitors and how quickly you need them. There are many ways to acquire quality links including guest posting, directories and featured listing particularly, internal linking, links from industry sources, article submissions, social media links and many others.

One thing you should avoid is purchasing links from other websites because it's likely to lead to a penalty. In addition, the difficulty of being penalised is that you will struggle to remove any links that you've purchased, especially if there are hundreds of them.

Use ranking software

Use SEO software like SERanking.com to check your keyword rankings on Google and other search engines like Bing and Yahoo – for your country and other countries.

SERanking is affordable and has a nice interface that allows you to create PDF reports that you can share with your team or with clients.

From just £5 per month, you can monitor your rankings and make changes accordingly. When you first set up a website, it prompts you to connect with your Analytics account and pick keywords from your reports that you want to rank on.

It has an easy interface too, and it will only take a few minutes to understand. One of my favourite features is how the interface lists your sites for each keyword and search engine when you click the 'All Rankings' report for example.

Research your competitors

Find out how your direct competitors are ranking for keywords that are important to your business. Using tools like SERanking.com, you can compare your rankings with theirs side-by-side and you can use tools like Alexa to check how many backlinks they have and from which sites. Then, find out how you can get links from those same sites and similar ones in your category

It's easy to check who your competitors are in the organic search listings and all you have to do is search for your target keywords. However, you need a more advanced strategy to identify them to assess and monitor their search engine optimisation strategy. Alexa can help you do this easily and for a low monthly fee of about £6 per month, you can compare against competitors for acquisition and engagement metrics like unique visitors, page views, country rank, etc.

Set up your Google Search Console account

In case you have not created your Search Consoles account, now is the time to do it – you will need it. This free tool from Google should be a part of every SEO marketing strategy because of the wealth of information it provides. One of its popular features is the search terms reports that shows how you are ranked, and which ones are driving traffic to your website. This feature has become even more important since Google started showing 'no results' in 2011 for people who are logged into their Google account as they search

Bear in mind that this tool reports only Google traffic for the site you have verified and not for other traffic sources like Bing or pay per click traffic. For that you, need Google Analytics.

This tool provides you with a wealth of information about your website and your rankings. You can check any website errors and see if you have suffered a manual penalty. You can also submit your sitemap to get all your pages indexed by Google.

Move your website to WordPress.org

WordPress is by far the leading content management system with a huge list of features that includes plug-ins, themes and widgets that other platforms cannot match. It is free and many hosting providers now provide the one-click install that you can use to get your site up in minutes.

Optimise landing pages

Use the keyword planner tool in Google Adwords if you have an account there, to assess

how optimised your pages are for your keywords. So, enter your URL in the search box and then click search. It will bring up a list of keywords that are related to your pages.

This helps you see how optimised your pages are and you can use it to research keywords that you want to rank on. If you search with your site and find that the results have many keywords that don't reflect what you do, then it is time to change or update your website content and add your most important keywords.

Use Yoast SEO plug-in

This is one plug-in that should be part of your SEO marketing plan because of its ability to optimise your website features like title tags, content, images, indexing and so on, for higher rankings. It is used by thousands of WordPress sites and it is one of the most popular plug-ins.

Choose your Keywords Carefully

Your SEO campaign should start with keyword research. Your keywords are what searchers use to find your website on Google and to pick the right one is critical.

There are many free keyword tools to use like the Google Keyword tool to find your keywords. The ideal combination of keywords you pick will have high traffic volumes and low competition. You will want low competition keywords because they are easier to rank and they are sometimes more profitable, especially if they are long tail keywords.

Sign up to Google My Business

One of the first steps to SEO success is getting listed on Google Maps. The benefit is that you get a free listing on Google, right at the top for local searches for your services. Your listing also includes your address that makes it easy for your customers to find your business premises and a map too with directions.

Another benefit of a Google Places listing is customers can leave reviews about your services and their positive experience can enhance your brand.

To get started with Google Places for Business, you will need to provide your Business name, Address, Telephone Number, description of your services and various other details like trading hours and business category.

Optimise for other search engines

Google's share of Local search traffic is around 67%. That's a big slice of search traffic for sure, but there are other important players in this arena and they include Bing, Yahoo, Yell and a few others. Yell, for example, is very popular with local searchers and conversion rates there are very high. Another benefit is that having a listing on local sites like Yell, Yelp and Touch Local will boost your Google rankings.

On-page optimisation

Advice from Google to website owners looking to rank high on their search engine is to optimise their websites for visitors and not the search engines. Optimising your website for visitors or on-page optimisation is about providing content that is relevant, engaging, entertaining and keeps your visitors coming back to your site for more. It also helps improve your search engine rankings because other sites are more likely to link back to

your website.

Optimising for the search engines alone, which Google frowns upon, includes such black hat methods as keyword stuffing that ultimately will hurt your rankings.

Include keywords in your title tags, meta tags and page content, including your images. Also, get some links that point to your site and include your keywords in the anchor text.

Target Local SEO

Local Search Engine Optimisation or Local SEO presents opportunities for small businesses that include an increase in sales or leads, and greater visibility to local customers. It has become increasingly important as customers are now turning to search engines for local services. Google Stats also reveal that about 97% of consumers first search for local services online.

Local SEO is like normal SEO in many ways, but there are a few differences. The major difference is that local SEO high rankings are usually easier to achieve than a nationwide or international campaign. The traffic may be much lower in a local campaign but there are fewer competitors too and the conversion rates are even better.

If your business serves a local customer base, you will know how difficult it can be to reach your prospects with your offers. So, it's important you start early by optimising your keywords with local city, county and regional keywords that people are using to search on Google. Use the keyword planner tool to find these and incorporate them, and use them for link building too.

Get Top 3 Position

Always aim to be in the top 3 position for your main keywords because anything lower may not drive sufficient traffic to your website to reach your goals. The top 3 listings get over 70% of search click-throughs and that's for both branded and unbranded searches. Also, being in a top position boosts your credibility with target customers and prospects, and leads to greater profitability.

Why SEO?

SEO is mainly about getting your site to the top of the search engine rankings. One of its disadvantages is the length of time it takes to achieve high rankings, and a good strategy is to launch PPC campaigns while you work on your SEO to get your site to the top.

Certain important things to know as you do SEO are:

- Google has over 65% of search traffic and it uses over 200 factors in its algorithm calculations

- You should benchmark against competitors with tools such as Alexa Rank to help you set realistic goals

- Set up Google Analytics and Search Console tools early to understand where you are, which will also measure and report your progress

- Hire an SEO practitioner to help you with On-page and Off-page

optimisation if you don't have the skills and experience

• Don't buy links – it will get you penalised and the road back to recovery is long and hard

Connect with other bloggers

Find other bloggers in your niche who are interested in connecting with you and welcome guest posting. This will help increase your authority and brand awareness, and you will get more visitors to your website from people who trust and believe in what you have to say. It also helps to increase your backlinks and leads to higher search rankings too.

Make your site responsive

Your website should be optimised for mobile too, especially if your users access via smartphones – because Google now penalises sites that aren't mobile responsive. WordPress, for example, has plug-ins to make your site mobile responsive and you can download these for free.

Press Releases

Press releases still work and there are free resources if you have a great story to tell about your business or a news-worthy item. Some PR sites to submit to are:

• 24-7PressRelease.com

• PRLog.org

• IdeaMarketers.com

You should send your press release to your local or national media outlets, and if they are interested and publish it, you will see a lot of interest from visitors and customers.

Prioritise SEO Strategy

SEO for high search engine rankings has become a priority promotional strategy for over 90% of businesses on the web. This is because of the huge volumes of traffic that can be achieved by being on the first page of Google, Bing and Yahoo.

Recent research reveals that a no. 1 listing for brand searches on Google search results receives 45% of clicks, no. 2 gets about 25% and no. 3 gets about 13%. For non-branded searches, the results are quite similar with no. 1 receiving about 40% of click.

So, being in the top 3 should be a priority for your business and you should implement all SEO tactics like link building, content creation, etc. to achieve this.

Online Directories

Directories are still effective and there are many free ones that you can submit to like DMOZ. You should search for directories in your industry because links from these will be of greater benefit than general directories.

Launch Alexa

Want to keep an eye on your competitors and see what they are up to? Then Alexa is the

tool for you. Alexa is a competitor analysis tool that collects data on browsing behaviour and transmits it to Alexa.

With Alexa, you can see the ranking of your site globally and by country and you can see your visitor demographics and then compare this with your competitors'. By signing up for an account, you can compare 3 or 4 of your competitors on many key metrics and benchmark your progress towards achieving your objectives.

Get positive online reviews

Start collecting positive Google reviews to build your credibility, showcase your skills and experience. These reviews show up in search results when people search for your company and on Google Maps too.

Keyword density

WordPress plug-ins like SEO Yoast help you maintain the ideal keyword density for your pages. The ideal density is 2-4%, so that means for every 100 words of text, your keyword should be mentioned about 3 times on average. If it's too high, say like 10%, and then you could suffer a penalty for keyword stuffing, especially if it's excessive throughout your website.

If it's below 2%, you will struggle to achieve high rankings because your pages will be deemed as not being relevant to that keyword by the search engine robots.

Link Search Consoles and Google Analytics

Link your analytics and search consoles accounts in the admin section of your analytics account. This helps to analyse your site and improve your On-page SEO and check your site impressions.

Submit sitemaps to Bing Webmaster tools and Search Consoles

WordPress, for example, has sitemap plug-ins that you can use to create your sitemap and submit to Bing and Google. If you want to ensure that your pages are discovered and indexed by the search engines, then you need a sitemap. That's true especially if you have a large website that has many deep page levels.

It also helps to ensure that your pages are indexed faster and appear in the search results quicker.

Optimise for Bing and Yahoo

Bing and Yahoo are high traffic search engines. Although they are far behind Google, which has about 65% of traffic, they are still a great source for organic traffic. So, your SEO marketing strategy should include these two sites and from what I've discovered, their ranking algorithm is quite different from Google. Do your research according to your niche and work towards achieving page 1 listings for your keywords on these sites.

Create organic search KPIs

Create organic search objectives and KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) to track and measure your progress towards achieving your goals. Examples of KPIs for organic traffic are:

- Percentage increase in traffic

- 10% conversion rate for organic

- Reduce bounce rate below 50%

Check for manual penalties

If you've seen a drop in traffic or you're concerned that you do not see much traction with your SEO marketing strategy, then it's time to investigate. In your Search Console account, you can check if you have been penalised manually and if this is the case, then you should investigate the cause to fix it. Don't contact Google to ask why you've been penalised because they won't give a reason. You should just work towards making sure you have a great website that is not doing any black hat methods.

Optimise your images

Image search is big and it is one way to gain more traffic for your website. So ensure that your keywords are added as alt text and this will help to improve rankings in the Google Image search vertical. Alt text is also important for visually impaired people who use screen readers to read your website and for search engines that currently cannot read images.

Update title tags

This sounds obvious, however, over 80% of sites have duplicate title tags and this could harm your search rankings. In fact, without optimised title tags, your CTR (click through rate) in the search results will be low, and this will affect your traffic volumes. Use your Google Search Console account (formerly Webmaster Tools) to identify duplicate titles and change them as soon as you can.

You can view your organic CTR in your Search Consoles account and this reveals the number of people who've searched with your keywords and how many clicked through to your website.

Optimise for 2 to 3 keywords

Optimising your pages for 2 to 3 of your main keywords should be sufficient to help you target long tail keywords and bring high volumes of visitors to your site. If you have a 100-page site, for example, that could easily work out at 300 keywords you are targeting and that will bring you thousands of visitors each month.

Minimum 250 words per landing page

Aim for at least 250 words for over 80% of your pages to avoid being penalised for thin content. The search engines are looking at this to rank sites that they deem valuable to their searchers and if you have few words per page for many of your pages, then you will struggle to gain high rankings. This also helps to include your main keywords in the content and target both long tail and head keywords.

Increase page count

Google is now ranking sites with a high number of pages, higher than thin sites with only 10 to 12 pages for example. However, this differs from industry to industry and if you are

a local service business, it's likely that a 12-page website will be sufficient to include all the content that you need and this holds true for your competitors too. However, if you are in a sector like personal health and you have a thin site, then you will struggle to gain and maintain high Google rankings over your competitors.

Make it responsive

Mobile responsiveness is now a big factor in ranking results on mobile devices. If your site is not responsive, then it will not achieve high rankings for your keywords and competitors will always outrank you. On platforms like WordPress, all you need to make your site responsive is a plug-in and there are many free ones available to install in minutes.

Check Website Speed

Website speed is about ensuring that your site loads fast for new and returning visitors. Slow websites are a frustration for many visitors and this is a major reason people leave and never return. So, ensure that your site loads under 5 seconds and aim for 2 seconds to ensure that the user experience is great for your visitors. Use a tool like the Google Developers Page Speed Insights that's free and shows you what is causing your page to be slow and what you can do about it. These are some of the common issues that you need to fix and it will show for both mobile and desktop versions:

- Leverage browser caching

- Enable compression

- Minify CSS

- Minify JavaScript

- Optimise images

Meta-Analysis

This includes your title and meta description tags and they're meant to have a unique content for each page, and include the keywords that you want to rank on. Your title should have up to 70 characters and your meta description between 70 – 160 characters describing what the page is all about. You can check your Google Search Console account (formerly Webmaster Tools) for any problems like duplicate meta tags or tags that are too short.

It will also notify you which pages have a missing or empty title, pages that have characters above 160 for the description and pages with duplicate rel="canonical" code.

Favicon

It's important to have a favicon that is consistent with your brand and makes your site stand out from competitor sites. As prospects search and click through to your site and also competitor sites, it's easy for them to remember your site and come back to purchase, request or quote, register or whatever other action that is available on your site.

Although it does not help your search rankings directly, it helps to create a professional look and makes it easy to identify you and boosts your branding. All these are important factors in creating trust and relationships on the web, and search engines like Google are rewarding businesses that achieve this, with higher rankings.

Custom 404 Page

Use a custom 404 page to help people find all proper content on your website that provides them with useful information that makes them stay longer. A 404 page is an error page that a visitor sees when they try to view a page that no longer exists on your website, like when the page has been deleted or they have mistyped the URL.

The standard page usually displayed doesn't contain helpful information and that's why the bounce rate is often high. However, a custom 404 page can quickly reverse this and you will see more engagement from your visitors.

Safe browsing

Create a great user experience on your site and try to avoid phishing and malware from your website. You can make your site more secure by using Google Safe Browsing to check against Google's list of sites that are suspected of phishing scams, spam, malware and unwanted software pages.

With the Safe Browsing service you can:

- Warn users before they click on links on your site that may lead to malware-infected pages.

- Prevent users from posting links to known phishing pages from your site.

- Check a list of pages against Google's lists of suspected phishing, malware, and unwanted software pages.

Information is available here: https://developers.google.com/safe-browsing/

W3C Validation

Your site should use valid markup that contains no HTML errors. Syntax errors make it difficult for search engines to index your pages. You should check your website with the W3C validation service at http://validator.w3.org/ and make sure it meets the web standards.

The W3C CSS validation tool is also available for CSS validation, to check if your code works well or to track real errors that you have missed. It is available here http://jigsaw.w3.org/css-validator/

Google Maps Listing

A maps listing is a fundamental part of a local online marketing strategy. As most people are using Google to look for your services, it's essential that you launch a Google My Business account and add your business addresses. If you have multiple locations, then you can create an account for each location and with your Google+ account, you can share content, updates, pictures, contact details and much more.

Also, customers can leave reviews about your services and these will appear alongside your Maps listings and organic listings when people search for your business.

Your maps listing is mostly beneficial to prospects that want to find your offices or shop and even to call you directly from their mobile phones.

Check your site for errors

Use Google Search Console to check if there are problems on your site that are leading to poor search rankings. Some notable errors include slow loading speeds and malware.

Carry out SEO Audit

An SEO audit is one of the most important tasks to carry out as an SEO practitioner or website owner. There are many areas to cover in an audit and because Search Engine Optimisation is a relatively new marketing discipline, there is a high possibility of finding problems in a website and search optimisation.

For example, some webmasters will select a Content Management System (CMS) without carrying out an assessment of its impact on achieving high rankings on the search engines. Some will develop their own CMS and they will reveal many issues when an SEO audit is carried out.

Some areas to consider as part of your audit include website usability, accessibility/spiderability, Keywords, geolocation and on-page factors:

Usability

Often, Usability is not associated with SEO and organic ranking, but this is a very good place to start. The reason is that if your website visitors experience difficulties completing simple tasks like browsing, searching, navigating from page to page, downloading, and carry out many other tasks and events, they will leave in frustration and that will affect the performance of your website.

For example, bounce rate is an important metric in Google Analytics to measure visitor engagement on your site. It represents people who enter your site and leave (bounce) without viewing other pages – regardless of how long they have been on the landing page. Google takes this into consideration in its algorithm and sites with poor bounce rates compared to competitors will have lower rankings.

Bounce rate also affects the performance of Pay Per Click campaigns in Google Adwords and a good bounce will often lead to good quality scores and eventually a high Ad Rank.

Some factors to consider when carrying out a Usability review are conventions, sections, menus, breadcrumbs, content structure and any roadblocks that prevent people from doing what you want them to do on your website – like placing an order.

Ultimately, a site with good usability and excellent content will lead to people wanting to link to it and this will lead to higher Organic rankings.

Accessibility/Spiderability

Accessibility and Spiderabiity relate to your visitors and search engine bots respectively. However, accessibility is important to search engines too because they must be able to reach your website to be able to crawl it.

This is not as easy as it sounds and many webmasters get this wrong because of the many web design and implementation constructs that search spiders have to understand. Your site should be in HTML format because while spiders do crawl Flash files and images, they are difficult to analyse.

A well designed Information Architecture (IA) requires that you put some thought into it and this can bring many benefits to users and search engines. Search bots aren't able to understand pages the way humans do and this presents significant limitations for accessibility and spiderability.

One important factor is flat versus deep architecture. Flat sites require fewer clicks to get to inner pages and deep pages require many clicks to get to inner and deeper pages. Flat is often better for both spiders and humans but this will depend on the number of pages and categories.

Search Engine Health Check

Sometimes, your website will not be performing well in the search engines for the following reasons:

Many of your pages are not indexed by Google, Bing and Yahoo and you can find out by searching for site:yourdomain.com to check how many of your pages appear in the index. You can compare this with the number of pages that you have on your site and if there is a big difference, you should submit a sitemap to Google and Bing Webmaster Tools. This will often solve the indexing problem but you should check that your site is indexable by using the tools available in webmaster tools.

Sitemaps

By me (1)	All (1)

Sitemaps content

All content types
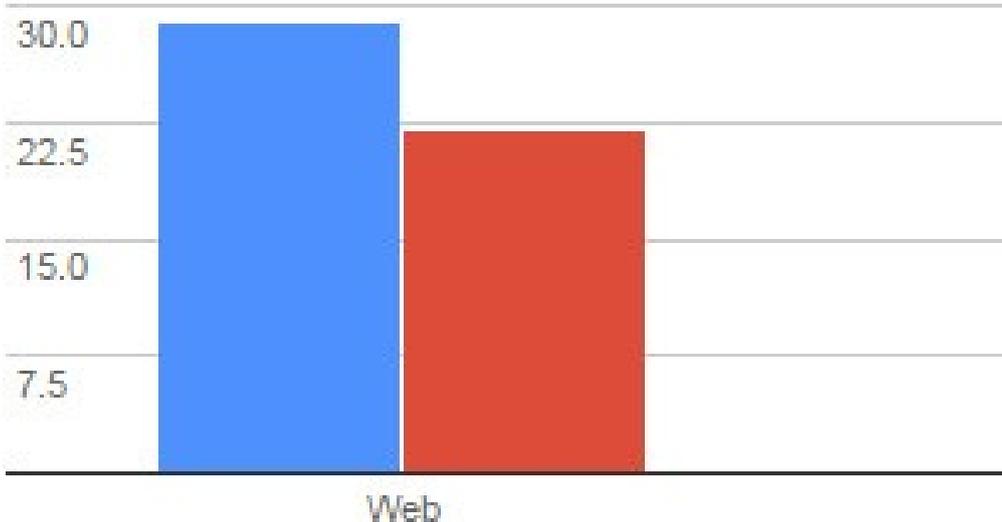- 🟦 Submitted
- 🟥 Indexed

Web pages

29 Submitted

22 Indexed

Sitemaps (All content types)

• Brand name search – Search on your brand terms on Google to assess how you are ranking and to check if you have been penalised or not. If you have, then you should take corrective action by following Google guidelines to start ranking again – because your competitors will be taking advantage of your absence.

• Ensure that the cached pages match the current pages on your site

Keyword Health Checks

Are you targeting the right keywords? This takes time to correct if you have been optimising your site for specific keywords and then realise that you are targeting either very competitive keywords that require large time and money outlay or your keywords have zero or low traffic volumes and won't bring the ROI that you require.

Avoid keyword cannibalisation – that is more than one page targeting the same keywords. This is a waste of resources and it's better to have specific keywords for specific pages to gain more traffic.

Geolocation targeting

If you are targeting a specific country, it is important to make the search engines know where your business is located. There are many ways to do this and they include using a country specific Top Level Domain (TLD) for your domain e.g. .co.uk.

Other things you can do include:

- Host your website on a local server and not one that is abroad. Surprisingly, many website owners get this wrong and wonder why they are getting traffic from locations that they have little interest in targeting

- Include your physical address on every page of your site

- Use Google Webmaster Tool geotargeting to your target country

- Setup Google Maps

- Get links from websites hosted in the country you are targeting

- Use the local language on your website

External Links

External links pointing to your web pages are one of the biggest factors in achieving high organic rankings because they are a vote for your website. You can check these inbound links using a tool such as Majestic SEO or Alexa, which records links to your site.

You should check the quality of links and compare these to your competitors' links and check for bad patterns in the anchor text, like what keywords have been used – because these are the ones you want to rank on. A sign of link purchasing is having a high percentage of anchor text with the same keyword and this could be seen as spam by Google.

Also, check that there are links to other pages on your site and not just the homepage – for example, a more natural linking distribution is many deep links in proportion to homepage links.

On-page Review

Check your title tag, meta description tag, content and image alt tag to ensure that they are well optimised for your keywords and there is no keyword spamming. Your title tag is very important because this is what searchers see in the Google search results; so you will want to make sure it is relevant and includes the keywords that you want to rank on. You are unlikely to rank high if you don't include your keywords in the title.

Check for a meta robots tag and if you do find one, then you may have spotted a problem because a NoFollow or NoIndex tag could hinder your search ranking plans.

Make sure that every page has a unique meta description because this is another tag that people will see in the search results and if it's relevant too, they are likely to click through. Although they are not a significant factor in ranking, they will likely be used in duplicate content calculations.

SEO vs. PPC

SEO and PPC are two of the most popular digital channels for online marketers and website owners. Both pose a challenge in budget and resource allocation and how their implementation and management are undertaken.

Here are some truths you will often hear regarding SEO and PPC, which you need to take into consideration as you plan and manage your digital marketing strategy:

• SEO is for Organic listings (free) while PPC Advertising is for Paid Ads.

• Pagerank for SEO and Quality Score for Adwords. You'll often hear PPC experts talk about quality scores – and that's because it is one of the most important metrics in your account.

• You are already doing Search Engine Optimisation even without having included it in your promotional mix. By creating content, publishing blogs and articles, linking to other websites and the mere fact of having a website means you have done or you're doing Search Engine Optimisation tasks whether you like it or not.

• A page one organic listing enhances your brand and gives your organisation more credibility.

• Run PPC campaigns as you work on your SEO.

• One major disadvantage of SEO nowadays is that Google has stopped showing search queries for Organic searches because of privacy regulations.

• Timescales for SEO vary whereas with Pay Per Click Advertising, you can know within a day what works and what doesn't.

So, getting a first page listing for both is desirable, but many Paid Ads will often receive substantial traffic volumes even if they are not on the first page =- especially when they seek quotes from multiple suppliers.

●	"loft conversions"	Main Campaign .co.uk	Loft Conversions	🗩 Below first page bid First page bid estimate: £1.84	£1.50 📈	16	3,257
●▾	+building +extension	Main Campaign .co.uk	Extensions - london	🗩 Below first page bid First page bid estimate: £1.39	£1.25 📈	14	737
●	+loft +conversion	Main Campaign .co.uk	Loft Conversions	🗩 Below first page bid First page bid estimate: £1.76	£1.25 📈	13	2,411

Organic listings on Page 2 and beyond also get clicks but this is often very low compared to page 1 listings that receive 95% of traffic. However, SEO listings receive significantly more traffic than Paid Ads at 80% and 20% respectively – and this is mainly because most searches are informational rather than transactional.

For SEO, you are targeting specific sites – Google, Yahoo and Bing. Whereas PPC includes a wide range of Search Partners like AOL, Ask, YouTube and other Google sites and millions of Display Partners that are part of the Adsense programme and provide an endless stream of impressions and clicks.

Many searchers ignore Paid listings because of:

1. Their positioning on the page

2. Searchers know that they are commercial listings

SERPs Visibility

Affiliate marketing helps your site appear higher and more often in the Search Engine Results Pages (SERPs) in two main ways: Firstly, you get many backlinks to your website from affiliate publishers who place links on their sites to yours, and this improves your rankings in the organic natural search results. Each backlink is like a vote for your site and the more votes you have, especially if they are of higher quality, then the higher you will be listed for your keywords.

Secondly, for affiliates that use pay per click advertising to promote your business or products, you will appear for more searches, especially for searches that you haven't identified earlier. However, you should have rules in place that prevent affiliates from bidding on your brand name, domain name and any close variants.

Stick with it

SEO is difficult! The worst thing you could do is give up on your local SEO efforts and allow your competitors to win. Local SEO at times can be difficult and getting that Number one spot or Page one listing on Google can be a mammoth task for any business in a competitive niche. It requires constant optimisation and providing quality content with a well-planned link building strategy. With perseverance, your site can achieve that coveted number one spot and receive tons of traffic and sales.

I put this one at the end because many people give up when they don't see any improvements. If you continue working on your SEO strategy and implementing the tips above, your site will achieve high rankings – guaranteed! So don't give up.

Pay Per Click Advertising

Launch PPC Campaigns

As a Google Adwords Certified Expert, Pay Per Click advertising is one of my favourite online advertising tools for the following reasons:

- Great for receiving high traffic volumes that are targeted to your products or services

- Highly measurable unlike many forms of online and offline channels including social media, TV advertising, radio and many others

- Easily controllable and can be turned on and off like a switch

- Only spend what you can afford and not a penny more

- Quick to implement and to start seeing results

There are now many other PPC platforms on Facebook, Twitter, Yell, Microsoft Bing and Yahoo.

However, PPC has its challenges and requires research into target markets before implementation. It's possible to see low returns or none if not set up correctly, so you should plan and talk to an expert first (Google Specialists are available for free).

Your research should include keyword research and analysis to see out the keyword terms that people use to search for what you offer. The data you find will include:

- Search volumes per month

- The volumes for locations you want to target

- It will produce negative keywords (that are similar to your main keywords but you don't want to bid on)

- It will give you an idea of what people are looking for and how they search

Also, the Display Network is available which works differently from the Search Network in many ways. With the display network, people aren't searching for your products – but on sites that they visit which are closely related to what you do, you can target them with contextually targeted text and banner ads that they can click on to get to your landing pages and website.

Test your PPC Ads

Always test your PPC ads to ensure you are promoting the benefits that your target audience is interested. You can test absolutely anything including offers, discounts, price, features, benefits, calls to action, coupons, Dynamic Keyword Insertion and much more.

For each ad group, you should have at least two ads so that you can run some split tests

and then choose the best-performing ones.

Without testing, you won't know which features or benefits your target markets are most responsive to, and your click through rates and conversions will underperform. The reality is, many advertisers do not test, and that is an advantage to you of course – and your campaigns will be more profitable.

Launch retargeting campaigns

If you've had website visitors who've browsed and shown some interest in your products or services but did not contact you, and you are wondering how you can get them back to your site, then remarketing is the answer.

With your adwords and analytics accounts you can setup remarketing audiences that you can target with banners and get them to return to your site. For example, you can create an audience of people who've visited a specific download page but did not download your whitepapers or reports, and then retarget them with banner ads as they visit other sites that are part of the Google Display Network.

Run Display Campaign

Despite their low CTR (click through rate), banners are an effective way to promote your products and boost your sales. In fact, banner ads are effective at raising brand awareness (not just for direct response) on Google Adwords, Bing and other platforms. You can create and promote your banner ads in just minutes.

You can also run text ads on the Google Display Network. Although not as impactful as banners, you will often see a better conversion rate because people who read the text will be more qualified – unlike many banner clicks which are out of curiosity.

Video Campaign

For maximum impact and creating brand awareness, video beats all other forms of promotional tactics because of its audio and visual features.

There are many video sites on the web to upload your videos, including YouTube and Vimeo. Also, in your Google Adwords account, you can create a video campaign to promote your video ads.

Wordtracker Keyword Research Tool

Wordtracker is one of the best keyword research tools on the market because:

> • It provides you with greater insight into the competitiveness of your keywords

> • It helps you to build your site around your keywords and ensure that it is optimised for the search engines

> • Helps find long tail keywords

> • It is packed with resources and videos that teach you how to promote your site with your keywords

- It has a link building feature that helps you find quality backlinks

However, Wordtracker is not the cheapest keyword research tool, and the basic subscription price is $27 per month.

Use Merge Words

If you want to build a long list of long-tail keywords that you will bid on in Adwords or Bing Ads, then www.mergewords.com is the tool for you. It offers you three boxes that you use to merge words fast and easily, and you can build thousands of keywords to bid on. It's also useful for domain name ideas.

Launch Bing Ads

Bing Ads is the second most popular Pay Per Click program after Google Adwords. It had a significant boost when it acquired Yahoo, which is now part of its network.

One feature I like about Bing Ads is the option to import your Adwords campaigns into your account. So you don't have to create new campaigns from scratch, and if you are starting out in PPC advertising, then it's best to set up an Adwords account and then import it to Bing Ads because that will save you a lot of time.

Display Campaigns for B2B

The display network in Google Adwords and Bing Ads is a great resource for B2B businesses that want to raise awareness of their products and educate and inform other businesses of what they have to offer.

This is especially helpful for B2Bs that have recently launched a new product or service, and target markets are not aware of its existence. In such a case, running a search campaign will not be helpful to increase awareness or sales because the product/service is at an introductory stage and very few know of it.

So, the display network is very helpful especially for businesses that lack the finances to launch a mass media campaign on TV or print to raise awareness.

Here, the display network can be used by businesses to create banner ads that run on sites that are part of the Google Adsense program and have chosen to display 3rd party ads on their sites.

Shopping Ads

First, you create a data feed in XML or CSV format that lists all the products you want to promote on Google. Next, you create a Google Merchant Center account; upload your feed; verify your website, and then link it to your Adwords account. Then you create a PLA (Product Listing Ad) campaign in Adwords and create the ad groups that are related to the products in your feed.

Launch comparison shopping

Comparison advertising is a type of online advertising where your products are listed alongside other retailers' products, and people compare them to price, features, quality, reviews, etc. To advertise your products and website in this way, you need to partner with a comparison engine like Kelkoo, Pricegrabber or Nextag and supply them with your product feed, which includes all the products you want to advertise.

Google shopping is also another comparison option to advertise your products on, and you will submit a product feed to your merchant centre account and then create a Product Listing Ad (PLA) campaign in Adwords to promote your products.

Add a call to action (CTA)

It always surprises me how many advertisers leave out a call to action on their banners. A CTA leads to higher click-through rates (CTR) because it makes it easy for people to understand what you want them to do on your website – like purchase, download, signup, register, contact us, etc. However, your CTA should be strong and include a benefit that is of interest to your target audience and you should avoid something like 'Click Here'.

Raise brand awareness

Banners are effective at raising brand awareness for your business, products, services or personal brand. Because of their wide reach and combination of text, colours, graphics and animation, you can create a lasting impression for your brand that you can reinforce each time your target audience sees your banners.

Create multiple banner sizes

The more banner sizes you have, the more people you can reach. Most sites and app placements only accept specific banner sizes, and if you don't have them, then you will not be able to advertise on these sites. The main banner sites accepted on the Google Display Network are:

- Vertical rectangle: 240 x 400

- Mobile leaderboard: 320 x 50

- Banner: 468 x 60

- Leaderboard: 728 x 90

- Square: 250 x 250

- Small square: 200 x 200

- Large rectangle: 336 x 280

- Inline rectangle: 300 x 250

- Skyscraper: 120 x 600

- Wide skyscraper: 160 x 600

- Half-page: 300 x 600

- Large leaderboard: 970 x 90

- Large mobile banner: 320 x 100

- Billboard: 970 x 250

- Portrait: 300 x 1050

And each banner should be no larger than 150KB. Also, the file type formats accepted are JPG, GIF, PNG and JPEG.

Choose placements carefully

There is a wide range of placements to choose from on GDN, and not all of them will be good for your website. Google allows you to choose which content placements you want and some that you might want to avoid are:

- Death and tragedy sites

- Sexually suggestive sites

- Sites with profanity and rough language

- And military and international conflict sites

These types of placements and content could damage your brand, and you may want to exclude them if it is a real concern for your business.

Test banners

Create at least two banners for each size, with slightly different features, benefits and messages to test what people respond to. This is known as split testing and looking at your Click Through Rate (CTR) for each banner will inform you which are the better ones. However, you should ensure that you receive sufficient traffic volumes for your banners to ensure that you can base your decision on sufficient data. Also, conversion rate data will also help to identify the better ads, and you can then adjust them accordingly.

Match your branding

Matching your brand identity on all banners you create is important to promoting your business effectively and achieving high brand recall. So your brand name, colours, tag line, logo, positioning and messages should be consistent on your website, banners, offline advertising, and anywhere else your target markets come in contact with your business.

Add offers and discounts

To increase CTR and purchases on your site, make sure you add any offers, discounts in your banners. These are effective incentives, and you should test them too, to see which ones are the best for your business.

Turn off mobile app placements

App placements are ineffective for many advertisers simply because mobile screen sizes are small, and as people scroll on their devices, they mistakenly click on ads. And this is one reason conversion rates are very low on these devices. On the Display Network, you can turn these off if you've reviewed your traffic and seen that they are not converting or even before you run any ads.

Landing pages

Send prospects to landing pages that are related to the messages and offers they've seen on your banners. This helps to reduce bounce rates and improves conversions for your business. Also, the home page is usually not the best place to send them, and an inner page is often better because it will be more relevant to the communication in the banner.

Targeted text ads

Text ads are an important feature of advertising on the web, and they are the primary ad type on pay per click platforms like Google Adwords, Bing Ads, Facebook, etc. However, one of their challenges is that they limit the number of words and characters that you can add. For example, on Google Adwords and for English ads especially, the title has a 25 character limit, and that usually equates to a maximum of 3 words – and the 2 description lines each has a maximum of 35 character limit – and the display URL has a 35 character limit.

So, you have little space to promote your products or services, and you have to make the most of it. An effective tactic is to include the keyword in the title, highlight one benefit and include a call to action in the description. This will ensure that your ads are relevant, readable, understandable and most importantly- targeted.

Ad placements

Ad placement on websites and apps that are related to your industry and sector is an important marketing promotion strategy to consider. On Adwords, you have access to the display planner; a tool that works similarly to the keyword planner and helps you discover sites to advertise on with your banner and text ads.

The tool shows you the potential impressions for your ads and what demographics visits the sites you want to advertise on.

Pay Per Click (PPC) Advertising Copy

More copywriters are offering PPC copywriting services because of the increase in advertisers on platforms like Google Adwords and Bing Ads. However, writing PPC text ads is very different from writing website copy where there is more space to put across your messages and highlight the full range of services available.

With PPC copy, you only have 105 characters to play with including spaces – 25 for the headline and 35 characters for each description line. So, it's important that the ads are highly focused and include only one big benefit and incentive to get prospects to click. Also, ads should have a good call to action and should avoid talking about features and focus more on benefits.

Location Extensions in Adwords

Location extensions are a feature in your Google Adwords campaigns under the Ad extensions tab that enable you to display your address under your ad. To add your locations, you first create a Google My Business account and then link it with your Adwords account. You manage all your locations in your My Business account.

It's important that you use the same Google account for Adwords and Analytics otherwise you will not be able to sync your addresses into your Adwords account.

Your competitors will be implementing this, and it's important that you do too and make your ads stand out so your business can be found easily.

Mobile advertising

Many people looking for local services such as restaurants, parking spaces, cinemas and so on are 'On the Go' and their mobile devices, especially Smartphones, which are important to them in finding these services. So, businesses need to ensure that they are easily found on these smaller devices and that the user experience is great. That means the website should be responsive and according to Google's latest updates in 2015, they are now demoting sites on mobile devices that are not responsive.

Responsive sites create a great experience for website visitors and make it easy to find information and browse from page to page.

Also, the click-to-call functionality on mobiles makes it easy for people to call your business directly from a search listing and you are charged the same price as a standard text link click on Adwords.

Create rich media ads

Rich media ads are popular, and they help to create a lasting impression with target markets. They use advanced technology such as streaming video that interacts with the user.
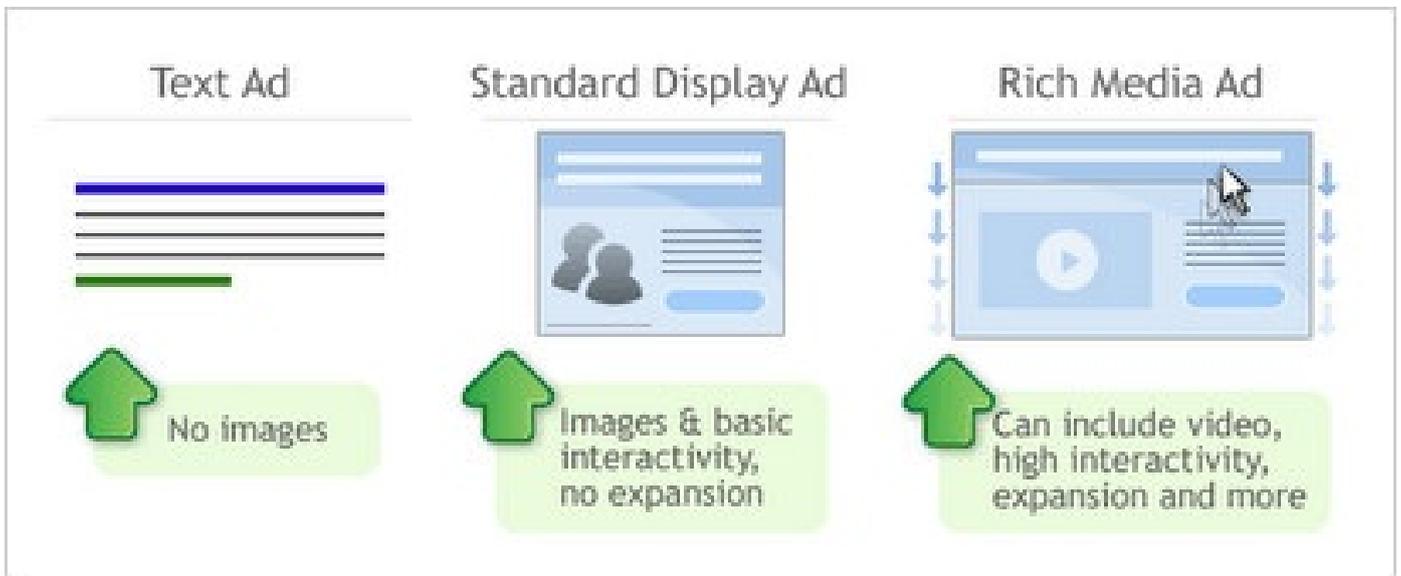
Target more keywords

For both your SEO (search engine optimisation) and PPC (pay per click) campaigns, you should regularly research new keywords to increase website traffic volumes and boost sales. With PPC, you can easily turn on new keywords based on searches and start bidding on these keywords to get more customers. With SEO, you will need to optimise your site and start off-site campaigns to start receiving traffic for these new keywords you want to target.

This is known as Search Engine Marketing, and it has many benefits like being:

- Highly measurable

- Easy to implement

- Cost-effective compared to other channels

- Little advertising wastage unlike traditional forms of advertising.

Mobile Ad extensions

Google Adwords provides sitelinks and callout extensions that you can use to promote other pages on your site. These appear under your standard text ad, and you can create mobile-specific ones to target people who are searching on mobile. If you have a special offer, for example, that would be of benefit to users 'on the go'; then these extensions can help you to highlight these offers separately from the main text.

Mobile-specific creatives

Mobile-specific creatives help to target prospects with messages and offers that are easy-to-read and interact with on mobile devices. Many advertisers will create one set of banners or rich media ads for desktop viewers without taking into consideration that these will also be viewed on smaller devices – and often the results are not good. So, it's important to create the banners with the correct mobile dimensions that will make them easily viewed and accessible on mobile devices.

Brand Awareness - Display Network

The display network provides the best opportunity to build brand awareness. It gives you the opportunity to connect with prospects at the right time on thousands of placements that make up the Google Display Network. Using rich media ads and CPM bidding, you can reach your target markets using placements in Adwords.

Google's Display Network partners include a wide range of sites that are part of its Adsense program and they are known as publishers – and they publish advertisers' text and banner ads on their sites.

There are various placement types available on the Display network, and it's important that you pick the right ones that are in line with your brand and are frequented by your target markets. So, you should avoid placing your ads on sites that could damage your brand such as the examples in the diagram below:

The placement options you have are many, and you could include or block the following:

- Forums

- Social networks

- Parked domains

- Error pages

- In-game sites

- And more

There are two options for placing your ads on these sites, and they include automatic and managed placements.

Automatic placements are based on the keywords that you add to your ad groups and the system finds sites that have those keywords in their content. It has many disadvantages because it gives you less control over where your ads will appear. For example, if you

haven't excluded apps, you will get a lot of app traffic, and from my experience, this traffic has a low conversion rate because many people who use apps click ads accidentally because of the small screen size.

With managed placements, you get to choose the sites to advertise on and gives you greater control over where your ads appear. There have been many embarrassing stories of companies and government departments automatically placing their ads on sites that are ethically and morally questionable.

Brand Awareness - Search Network

The search network is an important link in the path to purchase because when people have become familiar with your brand, and have a favourable view of it, they will use two main ways to come to your site:

1. They may bookmark your website and use that to come directly, or they will type your web address in the browser. This shows up as direct (none) traffic in your analytics, and these visitors will be familiar with your website

2. They will search for your business name on Google and surprisingly, many people still search using a domain name. So, if your business comes up in the Organic results, they will click through to your site. However, you may have some powerful competitors who will outrank you for your brand name, and I often see this for businesses that have a generic name or category name that cannot be trademarked.

Outranking Competitors

One of the difficulties of managing Adwords campaigns is trying to outrank a competitor that is determined to take the top position in the sponsored ads. This can easily turn into a very expensive task if two competitors have locked horns for the number 1 spot.

Your Auction Insights Report is a valuable report that lists some of your major competitors on [Google Adwords](). It reveals how successful your campaigns, ad groups and ads compare with competitors participating in the same auctions. So, you can start here to see who your competitors are, what share of impressions they have compared to you and what the 'top of the page rate' is for you and your competitors as below:

Display URL domain	Impression share ↓	Avg. position	Overlap rate	Position above rate	Top of page rate
bitrix24.com	48.00%	3.1	61.76%	14.29%	36.11%
You	45.33%	2.2	--	--	47.06%
wrike.com	37.33%	1.2	55.88%	100.00%	82.14%
primavera-tr.com	13.33%	3.7	23.53%	12.50%	10.00%
manageengine.com	13.33%	1.8	17.65%	66.67%	80.00%

Flexible Bid Strategies

Many advertisers often ignore flexible bid strategies and they don't realise the difference they could make to their rankings. In fact, we've managed many accounts where the advertiser didn't know how their competitors were outranking them, and it turns out that they weren't using a flexible bid strategy.

Your flexible bid strategies are available under Shared Library and the two main ones to help you outrank competitors are Target search page location and Target Outranking Share.

Target Search Page Location

This feature works with Search Network Only campaigns. So it is not available for Display Network campaigns. It automatically lowers or raises your bids to show your ad at the top of the page or on first page results.

Obviously, if you are looking to outrank competitors, then you will be more interested in the 'top of the first search results page' and not 'anywhere on the first search results page' option.
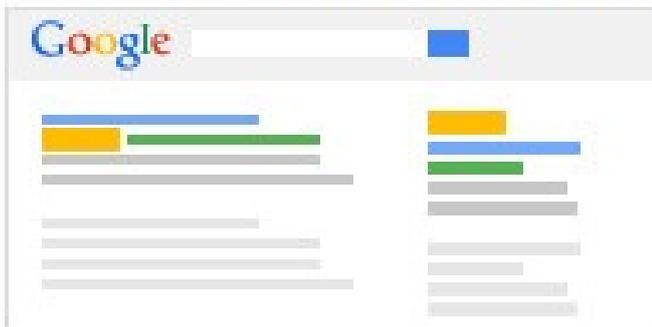
Target Outranking Share

If you are looking to outrank a particular competitor and you ensure that your ad is always above their ad in the search results, then this is the feature to implement.

It works with Search Network only campaigns and works with keywords, ad groups and campaigns.

So, how effective is 'target outranking share? In fact, it is very efficient! However, if you and a competitor are using it, then increase each domain's bid until one of them reaches their limit and the one with the best bid and quality score will win the higher ad rank.

Ad Rank

Ad Rank is simply the determination of your position in the ad search results. It's easy to calculate and the formula is

Ad Rank = CPC bid X Quality Score

You can have a high, medium or low rank based on your keyword quality scores and your CPC bid. It is calculated each time your ad is eligible to appear in the search results. Often, a high ad rank at a low cost is what most advertisers are looking for, so it is important to address any issues that may be hampering your objective to achieve this.

Sitelinks can also help to improve your ad rank if they are relevant and targeted.

So, to improve your ad rank, you need to develop the following:

Quality Scores

Three main factors determine your quality scores and they are 'expected click through rate', 'ad relevance' and landing page experience. Each of these factors will have a rating of 'above average', 'average' or 'below average' and you will need to improve any below average ratings.

There are two places you can see your keyword quality scores: (1) move your mouse over the speech bubble next to any keyword and a window will open like the one below, showing your quality score for that keyword.

Keyword: **shoes ladies**

Displaying ads right now?

Yes

Quality score Learn more

10/10   Expected click-through rate: **Above average**
Ad relevance: **Above average**
Landing page experience: **Above average**

Ad Preview and Diagnosis

Good quality scores across your account will improve your ad rank and will help to outrank your competitors. With poor quality scores, you would pay high CPC costs to outrank your competitors and this could leave you massively out of pocket.

Read my blog on how to improve keyword quality scores http://www.searchoptimise.co.uk/how-to-improve-keyword-quality-scores/

CPC Bid

You can set your CPC bids at the campaign, ad group and keyword level. If you want to outrank competitors, increasing bids is the fastest way to achieve that and you will often see results within 24 hours. When you increase your bids, many things will happen:

– You are likely to increase your ad position in the auction

– Your position on the search results page is likely to change – Let me explain: If you are in auction position one in the search results and you and other advertisers are on the right side of organic listings with nothing above the organic listings, by increasing your bid, you could get your ad above the organic listings and get more clicks for it.

However, its disadvantage is that it always leads to you spending more for each click and that will increase your costs.

There are two main choices to CPC bidding and they are:

a. Automatic – This is an easy way to bid and all you do is set your budget and allow the system to adjust your CPCs to bring you the most clicks for your budget. You have less control with this option and you are unlikely to outrank competitors who are determined to

achieve high positions.

b. Manual – This is my preferred option because it gives you greater control and you can set separate bids for your keywords. However, you are more likely to get this one wrong especially at the beginning because you will have little data on the average CPC rate.

Improve Quality Scores

Quality Score (QS) is one of the key features of an Adwords campaign that could determine true success from failure. The quality score for each keyword is rated on a scale of 1-10 and it is an estimate of the quality of your ads and landing pages triggered by your keywords.

It's one of two factors that determine your Ad Rank – and the other is Cost Per Click (CPC). So calculating Ad Rank is easy and the formula is:

Ad Rank = CPC bid X Quality Score

Ad Rank is simply the determination of your ads position in the results – and that includes where your ad shows on the page in relation to competitors and whether the ads are eligible to show at all. Ad Rank is calculated each time your ad is eligible to appear in the auction results, so your position can fluctuate each time depending on your competition.

Other factors considered in the calculation of Ad Rank are the expected impact of extensions and other ad formats.

This is an example of a good keyword quality score and what you should be aiming for:

To see your keyword quality scores, click the keyword tab and hover your mouse over the speech bubble next to any keyword's status.

These are the three factors that determine your quality scores and you will want to improve any that are 'Average' and 'Below Average':

Expected Click Through Rate

Expected click through rate is a measure of how likely your ad is to be clicked for a specific keyword irrespective of ad position, extensions and other formats that may affect

the visibility of your ad.

This is a prediction, so it differs from your average Click Through Rate (CTR) which is shown in the column section of your account. It is an estimate that assumes that the search term of the searcher will match the keyword exactly.

The three possible statuses of expected click through rate are 'Below Average' 'Average' and 'Above Average'. If it is below average, then it means you should consider changing your ad so that it closely reflects your ad group's keywords.

Ad Relevance

Ad relevance is about ensuring that each ad in the ad group is heavily related to the keywords in that ad group. Many advertisers get this wrong, through adding a large number of keywords that are not directly related to each other and then creating text ads that don't include some of the keywords in the headline or the description.

With hundreds of keywords in an ad group for example, it would be nearly impossible to have all the keywords in the ad and this will affect quality scores. People are likely to click an ad that has their search term in the headline, description and URL – and this will help to boost click through rates.

One feature used by more advanced users is Dynamic Keyword Insertion (DKI) to make ads more relevant. Now, you should be careful with this feature especially if you have broad match keywords and there is a potential to drive searches from people who search in all kinds of ways.

Sitelinks can also help to make your ads more relevant because you can promote other pages on your site, which could be more relevant to searchers.Your click type reports will reveal to you which are your most popular sitelinks and you can then look for more prominence for them and the benefits searchers are looking for on those specific pages.

Landing Page Experience

No matter how well written your ads, and are as effective as you intend them to be with high CTRs, you won't see much success if your landing pages don't deliver the promise that you made in your ads.

This is one of the biggest quality score problem we encounter with clients that approach us to manage their Google Adwords accounts. The explanation for this is quite simple! Many advertisers believe that all they have to do is create superb campaigns, bring high volumes of traffic to their sites and see the money rolling in.

Nothing could be further from the truth! Landing page experience is perhaps the most critical factor to high engagement and conversion rates and a poor landing page experience is usually due to the following:

> • Missing Call to action (CTA) – without a CTA, visitors will be confused about what to do on your landing pages and they are likely to do a number of things, including clicking the back button.

> • Slow loading pages – visitors won't stick around if pages take long to load. Aim to reduce page speed load times to below 5 seconds

- Poor website usability – Website usability is a big topic on its own and involves optimising your pages to ensure that they are easy to navigate and users can complete conversion actions on your site

- Ineffective website copy – If your copywriting skills are not up to scratch, then you should hire a copywriter that will create a copy that is engaging and targeted to your visitors.

- Trust and website quality – Your site should give visitors confidence that you can deliver on your promises. They should have the assurance that it is secure and if they can supply you with their personal details. If not, then they are likely to leave and go straight to your competitors.

Keep a keen eye on primary metrics such as bounce rate, average time on site, page views because these will inform you how effective your landing pages and website are at engagement.

PPC Implementation

Implementation of a PPC platform like Google Adwords or Bing Ads is relatively easy and can be done in minutes. All you need are your Google login details if you use other Google properties like Gmail and Google+ and you can create your Adwords account, and if you don't, the process is easy too and only takes a few minutes to complete.

However, because you are paying for every click to your site, you have less room for error. In fact, it calls for greater planning and the effective setup and implementation of your PPC campaigns for maximum returns.

SEO, on the other hand, has quite a complex implementation process and often requires that you carry out an analysis of your website, your competitors and setup of all the tools you'll need including Analytics, Webmaster Tools and others. No two SEO strategies are the same due to many factors that could be the cause of low rankings for your site – such as domain age, brand awareness, website content and hundreds of other signals that Google takes into consideration in ranking your site.

Control

One of the major differences between SEO and PPC is control. For PPC on platforms such as Google Adwords, you have an interface that provides you with a single location to manage all aspects of your strategy. Third party tools can play a part and will help with reporting and management. However, they are not as critical to your success as the Adwords interface.

SEO, on the other hand, requires multiple tools to measure, track and manage your strategy and you have many on and off page factors to take into consideration. You also have social media which now plays a bigger part in the success of your organic rankings (since Google created Google+ in 2011 and Facebook posts help Bing rankings). So, you won't have a single interface to do all of this and at times, you will require a team of social media, link building and SEO experts to assist.

Key Metrics

PPC and SEO metrics are similar and you have standard metrics such as bounce rate, average time on site and average page views to assess the performance of your Paid campaigns and Organic traffic. However, there are many other metrics to measure and manage and these will fall under your Acquisition, Conversion or Retention strategies.

A conversion metric that will be relevant to your Pay Per Click campaigns is Cost per conversion and you will find this in your [Adwords](#) account if you have set up conversion tracking or goal tracking. Because you pay for all PPC traffic you receive, calculating cost/conversion is easy and the system does it for you – and you can then set a target cost/conversion to improve the performance of your account.

Bounce rate is an engagement metric that's important to your SEO efforts because it determines what your rankings will be in the future. A high bounce rate is usually a sign that the destination pages are not well optimised and you could see a drop in rankings for the particular pages.

However, bounce rate is important for PPC campaigns because it's a factor taken into consideration in calculating your keyword quality scores.

Campaign and Ad Group Structure

Many advertisers fail to structure their PPC Adwords Campaigns and Ad Groups appropriately to make their Ads more effective. In fact, this is one of the biggest mistakes that both beginners and seasoned advertisers make and until they correct this, they get little benefit from their accounts.

The reality is that your campaigns and ad groups should work together to help you achieve your advertising goals, and that means you should understand what features are available on the campaign and the ad group levels.

It helps you to make changes quickly and you'll get more than an account that is easy to manage and keep organised – you will get ads and keywords that are related to each other and improve your quality scores.

Two effective ways to structure your campaigns is according to theme or site navigation. This helps you and others get around the account easily, and it improves your quality scores that are important factors in the performance of your account.

This is an example of an account that is structured to mirror the website:

Account	
Furniture shop	

Campaign	Campaign
Tables	Beds

Ad group	Ad group	Ad group	Ad group
Coffee tables	Dining tables	Sofa beds	King size beds
Ads Ad 1 Ad 2	**Ads** Ad 1 Ad 2	**Ads** Ad 1 Ad 2	**Ads** Ad 1 Ad 2

This structure has many benefits including:

- Nothing is omitted and all products are covered.

- Ad groups are more specific.

- No duplicate keywords across the account.

- Each campaign contains ad groups that focus on one product.

- Keywords are related directly to the Ads and improves Ad Rank.

Campaign Level Features

The following are features set at the campaign level only, and it will often determine how you structure your PPC account.

- **Location Settings** – This is one of the main features at the campaign level and it plays

an immense factor in how you structure your campaigns. If you are targeting multiple countries, cities, metros or regions, it's often best to set up a campaign for each location – that way, you have more control over the messages and communications your visitors see on Google (like shipping rates for example). However, there are times when it's acceptable to add multiple locations in the same campaign especially when you have standardised products, services and messages.

Many advertisers often neglect advanced location options targeting and this leads to poor performance of Ad campaigns. This feature helps you to target and exclude people from seeing your Ads based on their interest in physical location or any other locale.

It's often best to target people in your location with the settings below

However, if you are a hotel for example, many of your prospects will be outside your physical location so you may want to target them with the same campaign. But you should consider that locals and non-locals will have differing knowledge about the location of your hotel and how to get there – so it may make sense to create one campaign for locals and another for non-locals.

• **Budget** – Again, this is set at the campaign level, and the size of your budget will often determine how many campaigns you should have. If you have a small budget, then it's usually the case that you have fewer products or services to promote so that you can achieve your goals with one campaign and multiple ad groups.

Larger budgets usually mean more products to promote and you can then structure your account according to product lines or your website structure in the case of an e-commerce site.

• **Ad Scheduling** – This is an advanced setting that allows you greater control over when your Ads will run. You can run Ads on all days and hours or create custom schedules with the option to increase or decrease bids for specific hours and days.

• **Networks** – This is the first feature you set up at campaign creation, and you have a choice between five campaign types. The three main ones are Search Network with Display Select, Search Network Only and Display Network Only. Your choice between these will determine what ad group types you can run.

• **Language** – Language settings should go hand-in-hand with location targeting to make Ads more relevant. If you are targeting multiple countries with multiple languages, then you should create a campaign for each country with Ads written in the local language. Again, you should create multiple campaigns for users in the same country that speak different languages – for example, a Spanish campaign and English campaign for US visitors.

• **Bid Strategy** – Your main bid strategies of Focus on Clicks (CPC), Conversions (CPA) or Impressions (CPM) are set at the campaign level, and they govern the rules for each Ad group in the campaign. Your choice of Network will determine your clicks or impressions. CPM bidding is only available for Display Network Only and Remarketing Campaigns.

• **Campaign Experiments** – Perhaps one of the list used campaign features, Campaign Experiments is in Beta and allows you to run one experiment per campaign to test the performance of your keywords, ads and ad groups.

Ad Group Features

These are features created at the ad group level, and they should be structured in an efficient and effective way for maximum ROI.

• **Keywords** – Keywords are the heart of your campaign and the best way to structure your ad groups, and even campaigns are to group similar keywords together. So your ad groups should be tightly themed to ensure that you have good quality scores and ads that are relevant. It also makes sense to name your ad groups and campaigns according to the keywords contained in them and not the other way round.

• **Ads** – Text and image ads are two of the main ad types, and you can run both on the Display Network and only text ads on the Search Network. Text ads should always include keywords and should reflect the campaign structure.

• **Placements** – If you run a display network campaign, you can choose sites or placements to display your text and banner ads on.

Lower Bids

Lowering your bids is perhaps the easiest way of reducing your pay per click costs and still maintain traffic volumes and sale/lead count. However, you may see a dramatic drop in sales.

Keyword bids overrule ad group bids, so you may want to lower bids for specific keywords that are underperforming without removing them completely. For example, you may find that modified broad match keywords are driving the most traffic but at a high CPC rate, so you can reduce these individually.

Your Search Impression Share will inform you on how many impressions you are receiving and how many you are missing out on, based on your budget and Ad Rank. The campaign below had less than 10% of impressions over the past 30 days and it has low over 90% of impressions due to a low budget. So there are lots of scopes here to reduce pay per click costs and still maintain traffic volumes.

Search Impr. share ?	Search Lost IS (rank) ?	Search Lost IS (budget) ?
< 10%	0.58%	> 90%
—	—	—

If you want to lower your CPC bids across your campaign without lowering it for each ad group and keywords, which can be time-consuming, you can lower your bids in campaign settings for locations, as below:

Location	Bid adj. ?	Clicks ? ↓	Impr. ?
United Kingdom	- 30%	1,988	746,041
Total - other locations ?		0	0
Total		1,988	746,041

Lower costs - Quality Scores

If your quality scores look anything like this, then you need to act now to improve them to reduce Pay Per Click costs across your account.

View-through Conv. ?	Labels ?	Qual. ↑ score ?
0		--
0	--	2/10
0	--	2/10
0	--	2/10
0	--	2/10

Your quality score is one of two factors that determine your Ad Rank – the other is your CPC bid. Your Ad Rank will determine how much you will pay for clicks to your website.

The three main factors that determine your quality scores are Ad Relevance, Expected Click Through Rate and Landing Page Experience.

Each of these factors will have a rating of Below Average, Average or Above Average. So you will need to work on any factor that is below average to help improve your quality score. For example, if your 'landing page experience' is Below Average, you should review the page and make sure that it is the best page that you are sending visitors. Or you should consider updating the text and images and include a call to action and any features or benefits you have promised in your Ad. This is what visitors are looking for.

Good quality scores like the above lead to higher Ad Rank and lower PPC costs. It means your Ads are highly targeted and your landing pages are well optimised.

Target long tail keywords

Long tail keywords drive the most traffic on search engines, and they are often significantly cheaper than head keywords. Estimates for long tail keyword volumes range between 70 – 80% of all searches, so it makes sense to add these first before head keywords. And most advertisers either ignore or are not aware of the many benefits of targeting the long tail.

The Long Tail of Keywords
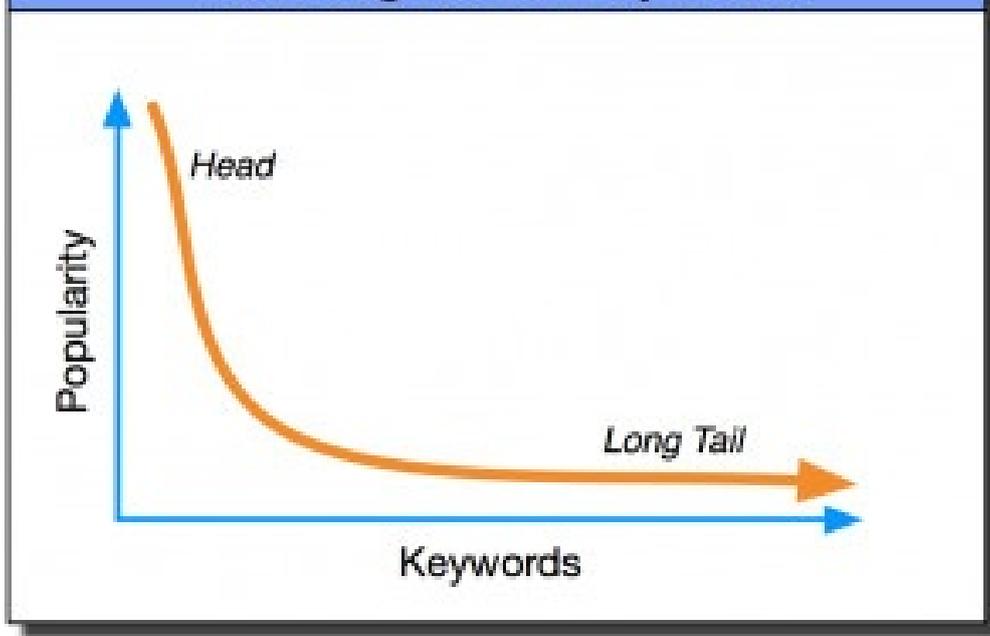
Targeting long tail keywords will allow you to lower your pay per click costs and still maintain traffic volumes and sales or leads.

Lower cost - Advertise on the Display Network

Shifting more of your budget to the Display Network will bring you more traffic at a lower cost. CPC bids are often significantly less than the Search Network and you can achieve the same traffic volumes for a lesser cost.

However, the Display Network is tricky at times, and you should ensure it fits well with your products and services. It's often not ideal for local services and emergency products or services where search is important, and it is best suited for branding goals instead.

Keyword Planner

The Keyword Planner is the first tool that most advertisers go to when they want to learn more about their market. And that makes sense considering that it is the ideal tool to find keywords to add to an existing campaign – and even research keywords that you want to use to build your campaigns.

So what can you learn from the keyword planner tool about your target markets?

a. Search Volumes

If you have a list of keywords and want to find out the traffic volume trends over the past 12 months, you can either upload a CSV file, especially if they are many, or enter them manually as in the example below:

What would you like to do?

▶ Search for new keyword and ad group ideas

▼ Get search volume for a list of keywords or group them into ad groups

Option 1: Enter keywords

```
womens clothing
womens clothes
online womens clothing
clothes women
womens fashion online
```
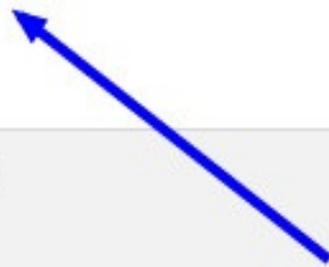
Option 2: Upload file

Choose file...

Supported files and formats

Targeting [?]

United Kingdom

Google

Negative keywords

Date range [?]

Show avg. monthly searches
for: Last 12 months

Get search volume

You can change the targeting to any location you like (country, city or region). Geographic segmentation is a basic segmentation base, and it is fundamental to the assessing of the size of the market. You can also add multiple locations here as in campaign settings. However, you should avoid targeting multiple countries with one campaign.

You can also choose to search for volumes on Google Only or both Google and Search Partners. If you plan to advertise on Search Partner sites, then it makes sense to include this traffic.
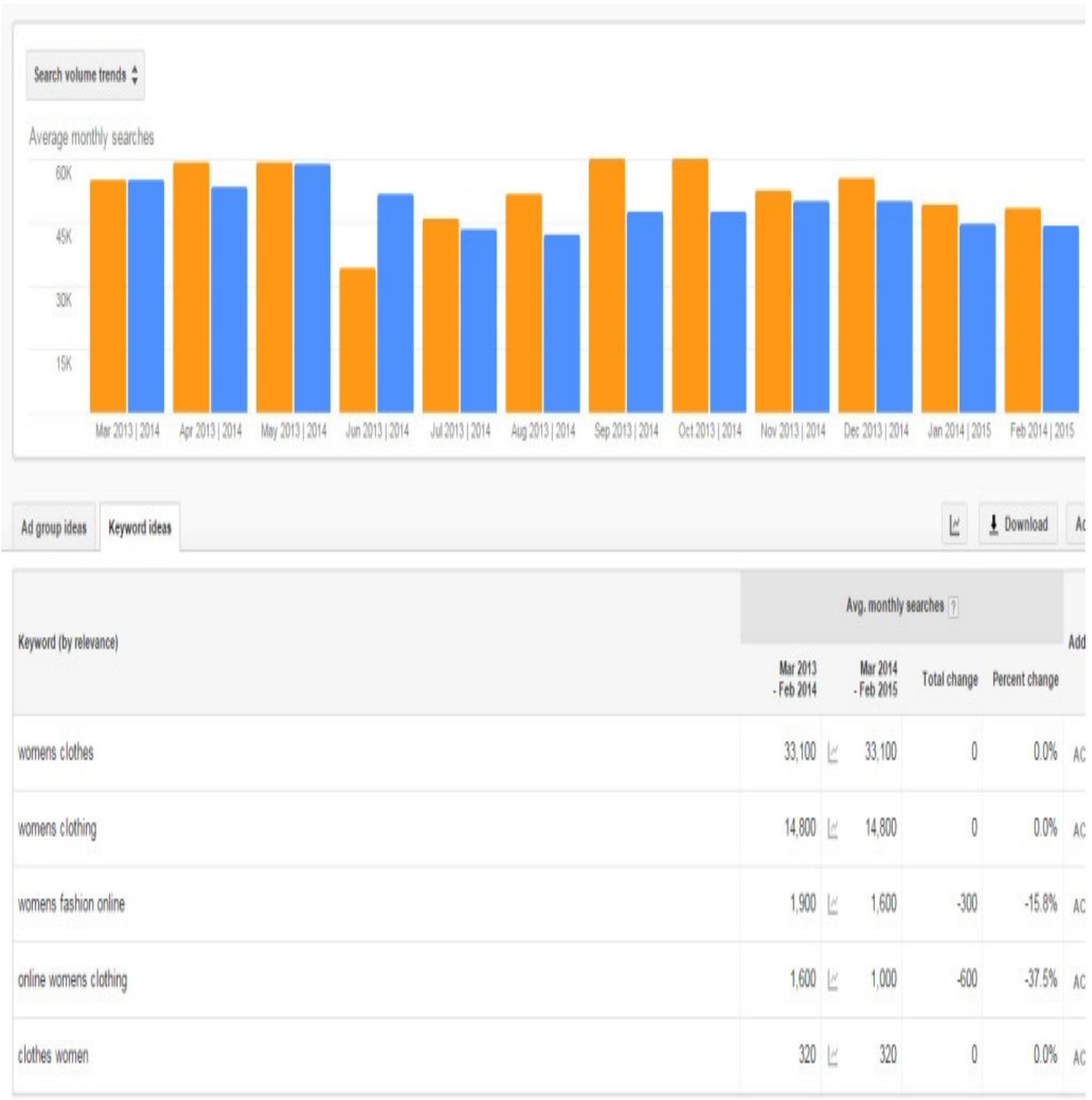
Because the results returned for your search are 'broad match types' (unless you make them a phrase or exact), it's a good idea to add some negative keywords, to get a more realistic picture of the true traffic volume.

Finally, the date range is another variable you can change and the longer it is, the clearer a picture you will have of traffic trends – 12 months should be sufficient for most markets. You can also compare with previous periods, with the same period last year and you can use a custom compare option.

This is what the tool will return when you click 'get search volume'. I've compared traffic volumes with the previous year

Keyword (by relevance)	Avg. monthly searches [?]				Add
	Mar 2013 - Feb 2014	Mar 2014 - Feb 2015	Total change	Percent change	
womens clothes	33,100	33,100	0	0.0%	AC
womens clothing	14,800	14,800	0	0.0%	AC
womens fashion online	1,900	1,600	-300	-15.8%	AC
online womens clothing	1,600	1,000	-600	-37.5%	AC
clothes women	320	320	0	0.0%	AC

b. Get traffic forecasts

If you already have a list of keywords and want to find out their cost traffic forecasts, then you can either upload them as CSV or one per line and you will get click and cost forecasts that are specific to your [AdWords](#) account and for the bid that you've added.

Your forecast date range can be for the next 7 days, or you can use a custom date to get an estimate of what clicks and costs you will receive and incur.

The follow is for an online clothing retailer and reveals that at a maximum CPC of £3.86, they can expect to receive between 330 – 403 clicks at a maximum cost of £417 – and the average position will be between 1.36 – 1.66. The average CPC will be £1.04.

Daily forecasts

Clicks	Impressions	Cost	Est. total conv.	Avg. position
330 – 403	14.4K – 17.6K	£341 – £417	–	1.36 – 1.66

Clicks

Max CPC: £3.86
Clicks: 413
Impressions: 16,000
Cost: £582.48

	Add keywords	Edit ▾	Match types ▾	⬇ Download

☐	Keyword	Ad Group	Max. CPC	Clicks	Impr.	Cost	CTR	Avg. CPC
☐	clothes women	womens clothing	£1.65	78.40	3,920.42	£80.46	2.0%	£1.03
☐	online womens clothing	womens clothing	£1.65	2.69	170.59	£3.24	1.6%	£1.21
☐	womens clothes	womens clothing	£1.65	146.39	5,382.67	£145.55	2.7%	£0.99
☐	womens clothing	womens clothing	£1.65	133.82	6,287.89	£144.59	2.1%	£1.08
☐	womens fashion online	womens clothing	£1.65	5.05	238.42	£5.43	2.1%	£1.08
	Total			366.35	16,000.00	£379.27	2.3%	£1.04

Traffic and cost estimates help you to determine the level of competition in your market and what the size of the market is. It then allows you to set a budget, and with this information, you can calculate your targeted CPA.

Overall, the keyword planner is a great tool to understand the size of the market and to calculate traffic and cost estimates. However, it won't tell you what their demographic profile is, and for that, you need other tools found within Adwords.
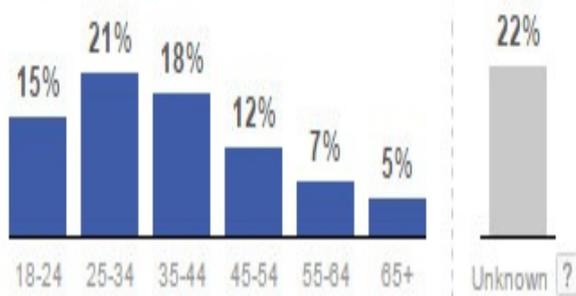
Display Planner

Using your landing pages or keywords or audiences, you can find Ad group ideas or placements across the Display Network to place your banners & Ads. The Display Planner has similar features to the Keyword Planner that is mentioned above, but you will have additional features like the bidding type (CPC, CPM or vCPM).

A search for 'womens clothing' to get placement ideas shows demographic data such as Age, Gender and Parental Status on the many potential sites – as below
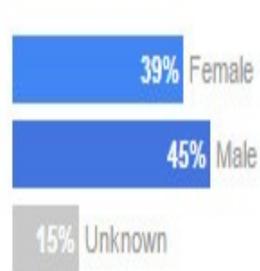
Available network inventory (Weekly ▾) ?

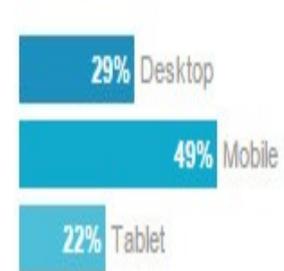# 50M – 100M Cookies   5B – 10B Impressions

AGE

15%	21%	18%	12%	7%	5%
18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+

22%

Unknown ?

GENDER

39% Female
45% Male
15% Unknown

DEVICE

29% Desktop
49% Mobile
22% Tablet

Ad group ideas	Individual targeting ideas

Keywords	Interests	Topics	Placements	Demographics	Remarketing

Gender		Age	
Female	»	18 - 24	»
Male	»	25 - 34	✓
Unknown ?	»	35 - 44	»
		45 - 54	»
Parental status			
Parent	»	55 - 64	»
Not a parent	»	65+	»
Unknown ?	»	Unknown ?	»

Tip: Add demographic targeting as a new ad group (with no other targeting) to reach as much of that demographic as possible.

Or, add it to an ad group with other targeting ideas to narrow the ad group reach by age, gender and parental status.

It also gives you an indication of cookie numbers and the potential impressions you can receive across the display network, but that will depend on your budget of course.

a. Demographics

This data shows that older Millennials (25-34 Age group) represent 21% of traffic and their most popular device is Mobile with a full browser at 61% of cookies. This is the Internet generation and their use of the Internet are extensive for social, browsing and purchasing purposes and they do this largely on the Go.
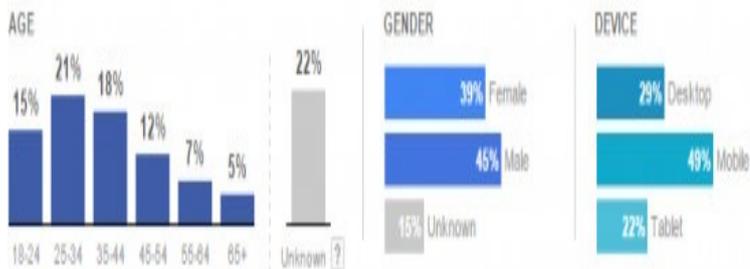
As the image above shows, traffic volumes for 35 to 54-year-olds is about 30% for both genders and it's actually more if you take 'unknown' age into consideration. These are Gen Y visitors and their use of devices will differ from Millennials when it comes to acquisition, browsing and conversion. You can combine this research data with other data to determine your targeting objectives for your markets.

b. Placements

Placements are sites across the internet – that are part of the Google Adsense programme – where you can place your banners and text Ads. As the image below shows, there are 268 sites, 72 mobile apps and 22 videos available based on the 'womens clothing' keyphrase. You can add any or all of these in your campaigns and the placements you choose will determine your traffic volumes and spend.

Available network inventory (Weekly ▼) ?

50M – 100M Cookies   5B – 10B Impressions

AGE
21%
18%
15%
12%
7%
5%
22%
18-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65+   Unknown ?

GENDER
39% Female
45% Male
15% Unknown

DEVICE
29% Desktop
49% Mobile
22% Tablet

Available network inventory: ON

Ad group ideas | Individual targeting ideas

Keywords | Interests | Topics | Placements | Demographics | Remarketing   All placements | Sites | Mobile apps | Videos

268 websites		72 mobile apps		22 videos	
Placement	Relevance	Placement	Relevance	Placement	Relevance
shopslike.co.uk		Dress Up Princess Sofia (Google Play), by Hom...		style (YouTube Channel)	
thelabelfinder.co.uk		All Apps > Apple App Store > Lifestyle		llimwalker (YouTube Channel)	
brightwiseltd.co.uk		DressUp Games (Google Play), by G.rMrK		refinery29tv (YouTube Channel)	
fashion-train.co.uk		All Apps > Google Play > Lifestyle		thelineupjm (YouTube Channel)	
wholesaleclothesshop.co.uk		Nikki UP2U: A dressing story (Google Play), by ...		vogue (YouTube Channel)	
retrochick.co.uk		Cute Girls -Dress up Game for Girls (iTunes App...		sunbeamsjess (YouTube Channel)	
pausemag.co.uk		Fashion Dress Up Story (iTunes App Store), by ...		fashionchannel (YouTube Channel)	
lovelagenlook.co.uk		Ariana Grande Hollywood (Google Play), by Fun ...		fatalefashioniii (YouTube Channel)	
menswearstyle.co.uk		Virtual Boyfriend Dressup Fever - My Fun Glam ...		beautycrush (YouTube Channel)	
look.co.uk		Be Your Own Stylish FREE - Dress up Game for...		popsugartvfab (YouTube Channel)	
wholesale-outlet.co.uk		Becky G Hollywood (Google Play), by Fun Gam...		etcllymlrs (YouTube Channel)	
elizabeth-anne.co.uk		New York Fashion Designer : Makeover & Dress...		jairwoo (YouTube Channel)	

b. Topics

The topics section is a great place to find new campaign, ad group and keyword ideas as the image below shows. You can expand your sub-categories and even block any that you don't find to be relevant.

| Topic		▼ Relevance ?	Hist. CPC ?	Cookies / wk ?	Impr. / wk
Beauty & Fitness > Fashion & Style			£0.00 – £0.50	5M – 10M	100M – 500M
Shopping > Apparel > Women's Clothing			£0.00 – £0.50	1M – 5M	50M – 100M
Shopping > Apparel			£0.00 – £0.50	10M – 50M	500M – 1B
Shopping > Apparel > Formal Wear			£0.00 – £0.50	500K – 1M	10M – 50M
Shopping > Apparel > Outerwear			£0.00 – £0.50	500K – 1M	10M – 50M
Beauty & Fitness > Fashion & Style > Fashion Designers & Collections			£0.00 – £0.50	1M – 5M	10M – 50M
Shopping > Apparel > Formal Wear > Bridal Wear			£0.00 – £0.50	500K – 1M	5M – 10M
Shopping > Apparel > Suits & Business Attire			£0.00 – £0.50	100K – 500K	1M – 5M

Who are your competitors?

First, we must define who your competitors are.

Every business has Direct and Indirect Competitors and they are prevalent on AdWords too. Direct competitors, for example, will offer similar products and services to your business and they will be targeting the same customers.

Indirect competitors also target the same customers but have different products, services and offers. An example is Amazon selling books about how to repair a mobile phone and targeting the same keywords that a mobile phone repair centre is targeting. The option here is that they can read a book on how to do it, or they can visit a repair centre.

The Auction Insights Report reveals who your direct and indirect competitors are and the image below shows how you view this report:
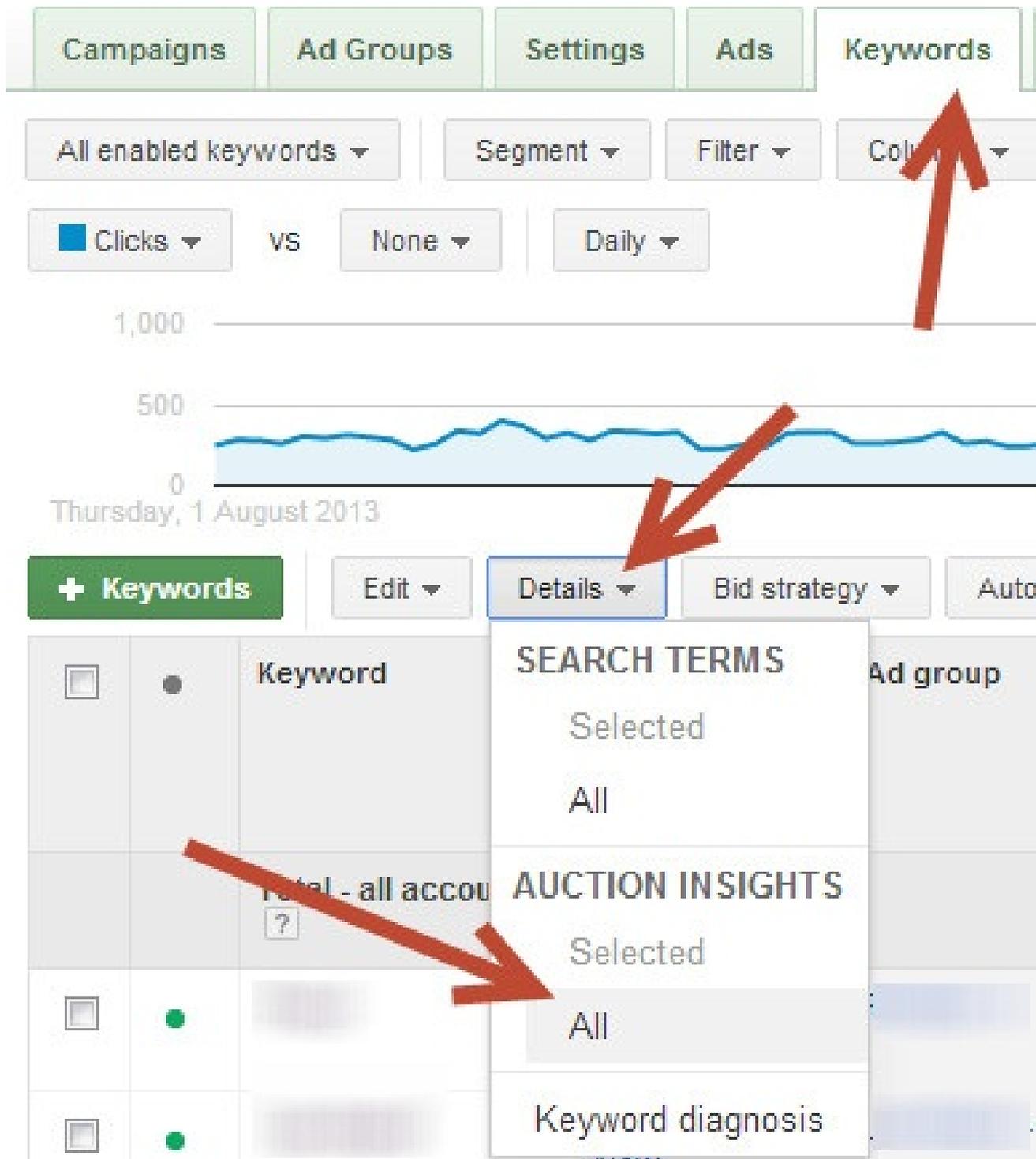
And this is an example of an Auction Insights Report for a repair business showing direct and indirect competitors:

Display URL domain ?	Impression share ? ↓	Avg. position ?
aerialforce.co.uk	57.80%	2.1
You	56.90%	2.7
actionaerials.co.uk	47.29%	2.1
tv-aerials.co.uk	32.84%	5.6
theplasmacentre.com	24.54%	4.6
adsdigital.com	23.08%	4
aerialtec.co.uk	21.87%	3.8
amazon.co.uk	19.60%	4.9
aerialservices.co.uk	19.57%	6.1
bracketsrus.co.uk	19.45%	2.7
express-installers.co.uk	17.40%	1.3

So, here are 14 spoiling tactics that competitors could do to obstruct or prevent the success of your Ads – and what you can do about it.

Competitors Copying Offers and Discounts

Discounts, offers and coupons are effective at increasing sales, or getting prospects to try a product they haven't used before. Competitors will be quick to match or beat any offers you list on your Ads or your landing pages.

And they will often create a coupon or discount just to spoil any product launch or Ads you are running.

It's not always viable to compete on price and savings alone, however, if you are in a sector where it's difficult to differentiate, then it's important to ensure that your prices are competitive – because your rivals are only a click away.

Competitors Copying Ads

Many competitors copy Ads because: they are lazy to think, not just creative, or they lack

the experience and assume that because all Ads look similar, then it should be working and they must do the same – they are afraid to test and try out new things

See how the Ads in this search for 'Big Data Solutions' produces similar titles. Obviously, someone was first with that title and it worked, until competitors followed suit – and no one took the time to write unique and targeted Ads.

It's worth hiring a copywriter with [Adwords](#) Ad experience to create some pithy lines that will increase CTR and differentiate them from your competitors' Ads.

Another option is to use Dynamic Keyword Insertion (DKI) in title, description and display URL.
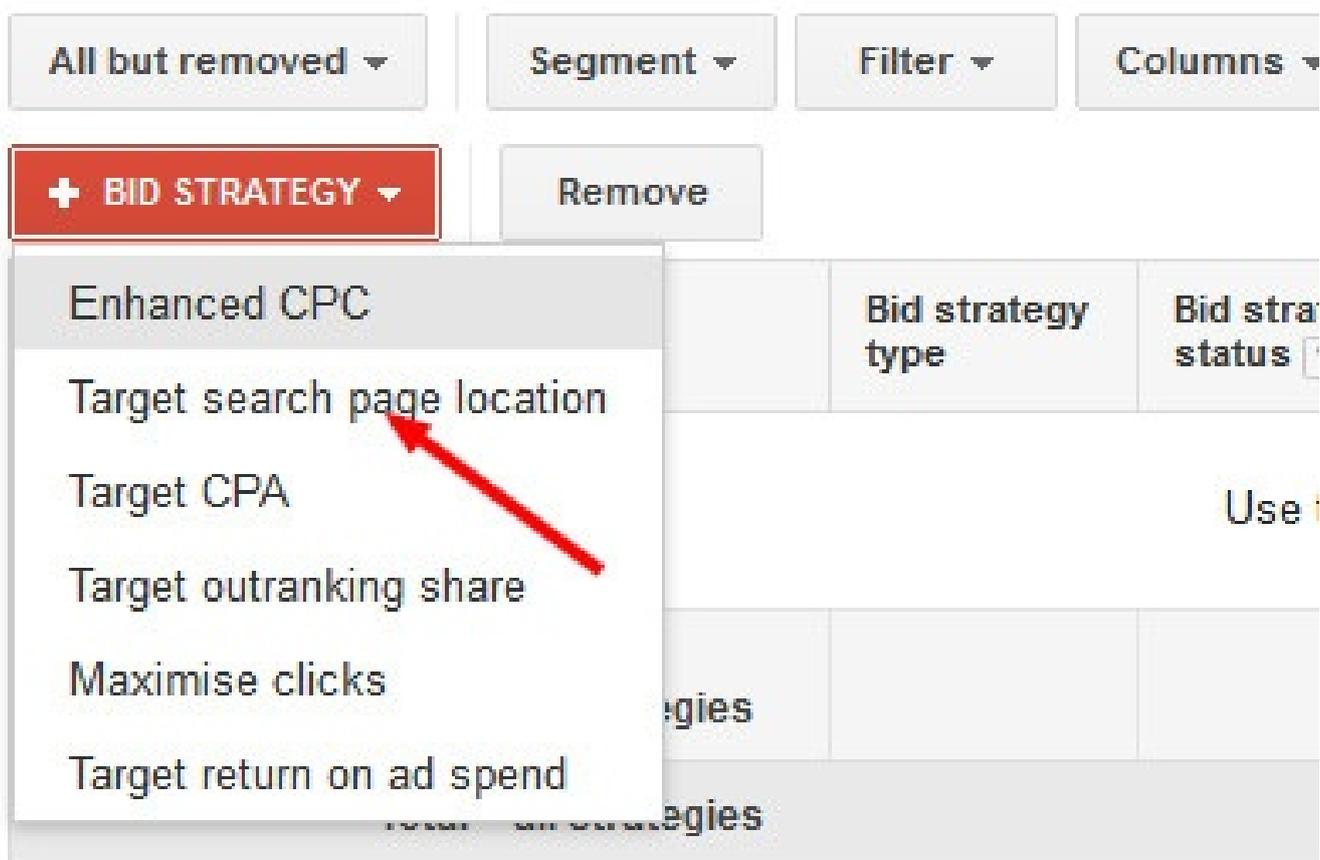
Competitors using similar bid strategies

Competitors will be fighting for a top Ad position most of the time and they will use

different strategies to do that. One of the easiest to do (although it can be costly) is a flexible bid strategy like 'target search page location' that allows them to secure a top position in the auction.

This is done in the 'Shared Library' and this strategy can be applied to campaigns, ad groups or keywords.

Its advantage is that it gives you automated buying across multiple or single campaigns – where, when and how you want it. If competitors are using this strategy and you are not, then they are likely to outrank you and see better click-through rates (CTR) and conversions too.

Competitors lowering prices

Price is the easiest element to change in the Marketing Mix and it is the only one that brings in revenue. Other elements of the marketing mix – product, distribution and promotion – are often much harder to change and there are costs associated with that.

Competitors lowering prices is a strategy often seen in the offline world, and discounters will use it to counter the launch of a rival's new product range. It's common online too, and that's why it is not often a good strategy to compete exclusively on price.

This is where you can use your Ads to highlight the value that you offer your customers

and the benefits that they will realise when they purchase from you.

New competitors

New entrants that are offering similar goods or services as you will likely be a problem because that could increase the Average CPC bids. It also means you have more competitors to beat and if they have better offers, then they could put you out of business.

There is very little you can do about New entrants. However, you should work towards building a strong online presence that includes obtaining positive reviews for your business and these can be displayed alongside your Ads as in the picture below.

There are Google partner review sites like Feefo and Trustpilot that you can join and use to start collecting reviews. These companies then send your details to Google and if you have at least 30 reviews in your account, the Stars will appear with your Ads.

A new competitor is unlikely to have positive reviews and case studies and testimonials from clients. So you are at an advantage here and you can build on that by offering outstanding customer service

Competitors bidding on your brand name

If you have a well-known strong brand in the market, then your competitors will want some of that traffic. They may not include your name in their text Ads, but they will add your brand as keywords that they can bid on.

This is where it may be important to bid on your own brand name – and you won't have to worry about cannibalisation. This includes your URL, brand name, misspellings, and any other variations of your brand name.

If competitors are bidding on your brand names and you are not, their Ads will appear above the organic search listings – and they will get some of that traffic because that is what they will see first.

The main benefits of bidding on your brand name are:

- It protects your brand

- Allows you to own the space

- It is cheap – less competition

- Conversions are high

- CTR is high and it boosts your Quality Scores

Filing a trademark complaint with Google

This is a defensive strategy, commonly used by big brands like Apple. So, it's not that common among many small and medium-sized business. Anyway, if a competitor files a complaint with Google about their trademark and prevent anyone from bidding on their brand name, then you won't be able to bid on them – and they will advise you to contact the trademark owner for an exception.

Competitors Clicking your Ads

Click fraud is not much of a problem nowadays, however if you are in a competitive sector like insurance and average bids are £10 and your competitors like your Ads out of curiosity; then that could cost you quite a bit. Not much you can do here and you should just factor it in your budget. Also, some searchers will click your Ads a few times as they are comparing prices and features.

The Invalid click report is available in your Adwords account and it shows clicks that Google considers to be illegitimate. This includes clicks from:

- Repeated manual clicks

- Automated tools

- Robots

- Or deceptive software

You won't be charged for any of these and Google actively monitors and ensures that they don't affect your reporting.

So, an example would be a competitor intending to increase your advertising costs by clicking on your Ads repetitively, or they might be curious about your site and what you are up to. However, if you suspect that you have been the victim of invalid clicks that Google hasn't discovered, then it's best to contact them and they will investigate.

To see invalid clicks, click Campaigns, then click Columns and then click Customise Columns. The window below will open and click Performance, then click Invalid Clicks, then click Apply.

Also, Google will filter out accidental clicks, like the second click of a double-click, as it provides no value.

And Google will credit your account for any clicks that have somehow escaped its automated detection in the past two months. You can view these on the billing tab and they will appear as 'invalid activity' on the transaction history page and you will be credited.

Overall, invalid clicks from competitors is not a problem nowadays and you can be sure that Google is working tirelessly to improve this.

Visitors doing comparison shopping

Now these aren't your competitors, of course. However, their actions can cost you a lot for very little in return. So, it's important to test the ideal position for your Ads and ensure that you are not paying high CPC bids for comparison shoppers. Google gives this as the reason why you may see multiple clicks from the same IP and they explain that this is not clicks but visitors doing comparison shopping and going back and forth between websites.

Competitors lowering CPC bids

Being more cost-efficient is critical on [AdWords](#) and one of the best ways to do that is by improving your quality scores. With high-quality scores (like 9/10 for example), your competitors will have to work hard to outrank you while paying a low average CPC.

Competitors will sometimes reduce their bids to remain cost-efficient and work towards improving their quality scores to maintain their positions and achieve high Ad Rank.

Competitors increasing budget and locations

Budgets and locations set at the campaign level are the primary tools that determine how much you will spend and who sees your Ads. For well-resourced competitors expanding into new territories is not a big problem and you can suddenly have a big competitor occupying your space in no time.

There are a few ways to differentiate yourself here, and one of them is demonstrating that you are a local business that understands its local customer base and that by supporting you, customers are actually helping the local economy.

Adding your phone number is important too because it shows that you are real – and not just a company based far away but serving a local base. This gives clients the confidence that they can have someone to talk to instantly that can help them solve any problems they have – and that they are guaranteed a quick response time.

Competitors adding keywords

Adding new keywords is similar to notifying more people about your products or services – who may not be aware of them. If you haven't exhausted all keywords in your industry and competitors are bidding on them, then you will certainly be losing a lot of business to your competitors.

Competitors using the Display Network to increase brand awareness

The display network provides the opportunity to increase traffic volumes and customers, especially when all traffic has been exhausted on the Search network. It's also a great way to increase brand awareness and make prospects aware of your products and business.

It's an effective vehicle for reaching your target market with the use of banners and rich media ads which include images, pictures, sound and animation – and this is not possible on the Search Network.

And all these features help to increase brand recall and brand recognition and it's an effective way to create a competitive advantage on Google.

Competitors offering free augmented services

Using callout extensions, for example, competitors will often highlight augmented services such as warranties, guarantees, customer service, price matching and other

benefits that look favourable in the eyes of customers –as below.

Display Ad Direct Response

The aim of a direct response campaign is to generate an immediate response like a sale on your website or a download of a whitepaper for business customers.

Display ads usually have a lower click through rate compared to search ads. However, they can be used effectively as part of a direct response campaign. In Google Adwords, you can create a 'Search Network with Display Select' campaign to advertise on high-quality sites that are effective at increasing sales and other conversion types on your website.

However, a better campaign option to create is a 'Display Network Only' campaign for easier management of your display ads and to get a wider range of targeting and bidding options.

Enhance brand awareness and reach

Because display banner ads are visual, and some include animation and flash, they have a higher impact than text ads and are just close behind video for impact. They help to target customers who are not aware of the brand or business and using banners and rich media ads on third party websites, they can reach a wide range of people who are not actively searching for your business or your brand.

Social Media Marketing

Pick one or two social platforms

Because of the proliferation of social network sites, many businesses have accounts on many of these sites, but they are effective in none. It's better to pick one social media site and manage it extremely well – because you will see far better results.

Twitter is my favourite platforms for the following reasons:

- Great for trending topics

- Easy to implement and grow a presence than many other sites

- Has a paid search platform

- Quick response from followers

Other platforms to consider are Facebook, Instagram, Google+, Pinterest and YouTube.

Increase awareness

Whether it's a product brand, a website, a business or your personal brand, social media is a great place to raise brand awareness and create a lasting impression on your target audience.

All your posts and interactions should be consistent with your brand identity, and this should be reinforced with the activity you do on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+ and any others.

Increase sales

After raising awareness about your products and business, sales usually follow. If you've created a product that meets the needs of your fan base, and you promote its benefits effectively, you will see an increase in traffic and website sales.

However, you should avoid excessive promotion on social media and aim for the 80/20 rule – 80% non-promotional, interesting and engaging content and 20% promotional content.

Grow your platform

Social media is a perfect place to grow your audience and platform especially if you are looking to publish a book either through a publisher or self-publishing. Publishers want to be convinced when that see your platform that you have a large audience following that could potentially buy your book when released.

And if you are self-publishing, you can't hope to sell any books without a platform – and this is what social media can do for you.

Connect with like-minded people

Connect with people in your industry to learn and share with each other. On Twitter, LinkedIn and other social platforms, you will find people with great ideas that you can

implement in your social media strategy, to help you achieve objectives. You will discover how they've built a great platform and what you need to do to achieve your social media marketing objectives.

Answer customer queries

Customers will have comments and questions about your products, and they will expect a quick response too. So make sure you are always available to respond and show that you care about their concerns.

This goes a long way towards building trust and loyalty – two things that many businesses find difficult to achieve on the web.

Launch a product

Have you just released a new product and wanted the world to know about it? Social media is even quicker than Press Releases for garnering interest and awareness, and the best part is that it's free. There is always a ready audience of people who are following you or your business, and that will be interested in your new product launch. And you can send them an exclusive discount to trial the product too.

Generate leads

If you are in the B2B sector, sites like LinkedIn and Twitter have a huge audience of people who will have an interest in your products or services – and they will retweet or republish your content to their lists, and you will potentially see greater interest from target prospects.

Increase engagement

People who you connect with on social media have shown an interest in what you have to say and when they click through to your website, they will be more engaged than visitors from other channels like organic and PPC.

Gain market insight

With social media, you can easily keep up with the latest trends and gain greater insight into your industry by following thought leaders and experts.

Promote your content

Have you just written an ebook, published a whitepaper or written some great blog posts, then social media is the best place to promote it. It's quick, and you should start to see traffic in minutes when you check your real-time reports in Google Analytics.

Sign up to Hootsuite

Hootsuite is my favourite tool for scheduling, tweeting and keeping an eye on mentions and retweets. It comes with a 30-day free trial, and that's longer than other Twitter tools.

It has an easy to use interface that is simple to navigate and as a novice user, you won't find it difficult to master because it doesn't have a steep learning curve.

So if you want to save yourself a lot of time and not have to be on twitter all day posting and retweeting, then this is the tool for you.

Retarget on Facebook

Run a remarketing campaign on Facebook to retarget people who've visited your site in the past. This can be your customers, and you can upload a data feed of your customers and send them regular offers. Or you could target people who visited your website or mobile app but did not complete their transaction.

Post daily

Few things are more important on social media sites than posting daily and connecting with your followers and connections. There are tools that can help you automate this like Buffer and Hootsuite.

Follow back

Use a tool like Hootsuite to automate this process and follow back people and organisations that have followed, as long as they are not spammers. This encourages two-way communication and helps build stronger connections

Tweet varied content

Tweet your own posts and posts from other sites that you think will be of interest to your followers and could benefit them greatly. It will also help you to create new connections with the owners of the content that you post and retweet.

Use hashtags sparingly

Avoid cramming your tweets with loads of hashtags because that just looks spammy and makes your tweets unreadable. Two or three at most should be fine and ensure that they are relevant to the message you are sending.

Connect on other platforms

Use a tool like socialOomph to send direct messages to your followers and encourage them to connect with you on your other platforms like LinkedIn. This is an effective strategy that will help to connect more with target audiences and grow your followers and connections.

Use socialOomph

Use socialOomph to send tailored direct messages to your followers like asking them to join you on other platforms, to visit your website or promote your book and services. You won't get this feature on other Twitter tools.

Sign up to Slideshare

Upload your PowerPoint presentations, documents, videos to slideshare and use that to promote your website, products or services. Visitors can leave comments and download your documents and share them with others, and this extends your reach.

Track with Google Analytics

Use analytics event tracking to track shares and likes on your website. You can create events in the admin section of your analytics account, and they will be available in the Reporting section of your account.

Check your social influence score on Klout

Your [Klout](#) score reflects how influential you are on social media. Knowing your score helps you to focus your efforts and post only content that people will like, retweet, share and so on. The more you get off that, the higher your score will be.

Run Twitter paid ads

Twitter ads are effective at putting your messages in front of people you want to target. Cost per click rates are quite low compared to other platforms, and you can create wide awareness for your business.

Create Facebook Ad campaigns

You can promote your products, services, website, business page, fan page with Facebook ads and you can send visitors to your website or your page. Facebook ads are precise at targeting and more effective than other PPC platforms because you can segment your target audience based on demographics, geographical, lifestyles and categories.

Design great social media covers

Hire a freelancer on Fiverr to create stunning covers for your social media profiles. Make sure you use the cover to convey a key message about your products or services and add any books you've written to encourage enquiries.

Join LinkedIn groups

There are many quality groups to join on LinkedIn in your sector, and you can post links, articles and like and comment on other people's posts. Use a tool like Hootsuite to post to each group you are joined to but avoid posting the same articles to multiple groups at the same time because members across groups are usually the same.

Take advantage of tools to share relevant content

Use third party social media tools like Buffer, Hootsuite, SocialOomph and [ManageFlitter](#) to automate your Twitter marketing strategy. You can use these tools to:

- Schedule tweets and free up your time

- Follow back people who follow you

- Follow people and businesses that are of interest to you

- Respond to mentions

- Thank people for retweeting your tweets

- Gain insight into your key metrics with analytics

Use social media to research

Social media sites have a wealth of information about target audience interests, social lives, topics they enjoy and what they dislike. This is all helpful for creating and enhancing your brand, which is almost impossible to do with other online channels.

Use social media analytics

Use analytics tools provided by the social networks to understand your target audience, who they are, what their interests are, their demographics and locations. This helps you to target your messages effectively, and you can also run ads to increase followers and traffic volumes. 3rd party analytics tools are available like Google Analytics which have a wealth of features to understand social actions on your site like visitors, shares, likes, etc.

Add a Twitter card

To increase follower engagement and interest in your tweets, then consider adding Twitter cards to display images with your tweets. People naturally are drawn to images, and tweets which include them have over 30% engagement than those without, so no matter how targeted and well written your content is, you can gain more exposure and interest by including a Twitter card.

Brand your profiles

Whether you represent a company brand or personal brand, you need consistency throughout your social media profiles and website. So create a brand identity that includes your name, tag line, colours, messages, etc. that are essential to positioning yourself or your business. These identity elements should be part of your profiles because these are some of the most important things that visitors and customers will remember about you and your business.

Develop social media plan

Create a social media that covers the following elements sequentially:

A. Research your markets

B. Choose your social media objectives

C. Monitor competitors

D. Create a competitive advantage

E. Target your markets

F. Set your budgets

G. Implement your strategy

H. Track the results

B2B social platforms

Not all platforms work for B2Bs simply because their target markets will not use all platforms to acquire new products or services. A social network to consider is LinkedIn which styles itself as a professional social media site and many B2Bs uses it to engage with new prospects and recruit qualified professionals to fill their positions.

Also, sites like slideshare.net are used by businesses to distribute their whitepapers, presentations, videos and demonstrations to showcase their skills and inform prospects on how they can benefit from their services. Prospective clients can then follow your organisation and receive updates on new material that you share. This helps to highlight

your expertise and demonstrate how your business can offer its services to the benefit of these prospects.

Messages You Want To Promote

The messages you send out on social sites are what people will identify your business with – so they should be of the highest quality. All messages, whether they are tweets, images, pictures, links, etc. should be in line with your brand identity and brand values, and they should reinforce the image that you want to put out there.

That may mean working with a brand strategy expert to help you create a unique positioning that is evident in your profile, cover images, logos, messages and everywhere else your target audience encounters your brand on social sites.

Who You Are Targeting

Knowing who you want to reach with your messages, offers and products is one of the first things to include in your social marketing plan. Whether they are existing customers, prospects or business customers; you should also know who they are and what they actually need.

Knowing who they are, helps you also to identify which social media sites are important to them. For example, if you want to reach professionals in your industry and highlight the launch of a new service or product, then LinkedIn and Twitter are likely the best platforms to use.

If you are an online retailer of women's fashion, then Facebook is likely a good site to help you boost brand awareness and create buzz around your products.

Your Social Budget

Now that you've decided which strategy you will implement, and you've chosen the tactics that will help you achieve your marketing objectives, it's now time to include the budget in your social media marketing plan. Setting the right budget is important because it helps you to implement all the tasks that are important to your strategy.

So, start by making a list of all the tactics that are part of your strategy and then find out what the costs will be for each and then add them to come up with your final budget. Also, include any costs related to hiring a social media expert that will help you to manage your accounts.

Advertise on social media

Social media sites like Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn now have many features, and some of these include paid advertisement to reach a wide range of demographics. These advertising tools make it possible for you to target individuals and businesses that are in your target market and increase your sales and leads.

These advertising tools aren't free of course, and you pay for traffic that clicks through to your website. However, this an effective customer acquisition strategy that leads to an increase in sales.

Offer discounts

Coupons, vouchers, money-off offers are effective at increasing interest from target

markets especially for consumer markets, and this helps to increase the customer base. Discounts can be offered and promoted in your online advertising campaigns and on platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and other social media sites.

However, discounts are not very effective at creating customer loyalty and often these customers who are looking for them will shop around to get the best offers.

Website Content Strategy

Choose your content marketing tactics

Content marketing is about creating text, images, etc. for your website, social media pages, directories and others that targeted your customers and prospects; and this also gets them interested in your offers.

On your website, you can implement the following as part of your content marketing strategy:

- Blog posts

- Website landing page text

- Images, pictures and illustrations

- Articles, whitepapers, case studies, etc.

- Navigation elements

- And many others

Create an eBook

If you offer professional services where people rely on your expertise, then an ebook is a great way to position yourself as an expert and increase your client base.

Many businesses can benefit from creating ebooks, and you can submit yours to Kindle too and give it away on your website for free and capture emails at the same time.

Creating an ebook is easy, and you can combine your best articles and blogs for example into a 10,000 ebook that you can give away or sell for a small price.

Create a blog

Adding a blog to your site and regular blogging has many benefits including promoting your products, engaging your visitors, increasing organic traffic, positioning yourself as an expert and many others. Search engines like Google also favour regularly updated sites, and will visit your site and blog more often to index your new pages.

You should aim to blog one post a day if possible or at least three times a week. At that rate, you will have an authority blog in no time

Blog regularly

Blogging has many benefits especially when regularly done, and some of them include:

- Leads to high traffic volumes from search engines

- Showcases your businesses expertise and leads to client confidence

- People return more to your site to read your content, and they share it

with others

- Visitors stay longer on your website

Do some website usability testing

Usability testing has many benefits including showing you what works and what doesn't; how effective your navigation is; what is hidden and what is visible and how long it takes people to complete various tasks on your site.

There are some ways to carry out a usability test including hiring someone who represents your target audience and getting them to complete various tasks on your website as you record them and take down notes. All you need is a quiet room, a computer, notebook and pen, camera and a willing participant. Or you could simply review each feature on your site to see how it benefits your target audiences and to see how easy it is likely to be for them to complete actions.

Create a call to action on every landing page

One reason many websites fail to convert visitors into customers or clients is because they don't have a clear call to action on their landing pages. Usability testing carried out by many experts reveal that many people don't know what to do when they get to a website, and they need clear instructions to direct their browsing activity. Some common calls to action include 'Buy Now' 'Download' 'Click Here' 'Search' and many others.

Move your site to Wordpress

WordPress is the world's leading content management system. It is used by millions of websites and has many benefits over its rivals such as being free, a blog system with thousands of 3rd party plug-ins and themes to enhance the design and functionality. It's easy to set up too, and many hosting companies now offer one-click setup that takes only a few minutes to complete. You should have a very good reason your site is not a Wordpress site.

Brainstorm content ideas

Content marketing ideas are everywhere, and you can come up with many good ones in a brainstorming session either on your own or with others in your team. So let your mind wander and don't stifle any ideas no matter how silly they appear at the beginning. It's often these that turn out to be winners and help to create a unique position for your business.

Target your audience

The most important part of creating a content marketing plan is to identify the audiences and markets you want to target. Individuals and businesses will visit your website, social platforms and anywhere else that you promote your content to interact with your business and benefit from your content.

If it is not of the highest quality and does not meet their needs, then they will not hang around for long, and they will defect to competitors. Finding out what your target audiences require is not difficult or expensive, and you can use survey tools to get responses or you can track your website metrics to see which content they respond to.

Even sites like Twitter provide analytics data to show which are some of your highest engagement posts and what their click-through rates are. You can then focus more on what people respond to the most and is important to your prospects and business goals.

Have a customer persona or target market in mind as you brainstorm content ideas and produce the content that will meet their needs. Ensure that your content is highly targeted and relevant so that it encourages your visitors to read on and return for more. Whether your content is for your website or your social media profiles, it should be of the best quality and unique too for SEO (search engine optimisation) purposes.

Types of content

There are various types of content you can create including:

- Articles

- Blogs

- Whitepapers

- Videos

- Images

- Social media posts

- Reports

- Guides

- Ebooks

- Infographics

In fact, there are hundreds of others and your choice between them depends on your target audience, nature of your business, your available resources and so on. Also, pick 4 or 5 content types to include in your content marketing plan and do them very well.

Managing your content

Part of your content marketing plan involves planning, writing, producing, and reporting on results. With a platform like WordPress.org, you will get a superb content management system for free that helps you produce quality content that is optimised for the search engines too. You can use plug-ins like SEO Yoast to ensure that your pages are optimised for your keywords.

Keyword research should be an active part of your content marketing strategy as you create new blogs, articles and change your website text. Keywords are what people use to find your website on the search engines, and if you include these keywords in your content, you have a higher chance of achieving higher organic search rankings.

When to publish your content

Create a calendar with dates on when to produce and publish your new content.

Also, you can use tools like Hootsuite to automate the publishing of your content on social networks like Twitter and LinkedIn. This is easier and quicker, and it saves you a lot of time which you can put towards creating more content.

Monitor Key Metrics

Use Google Analytics and other tracking software to measure the success of your content on key metrics like bounce rate, pages viewed, time on page, social shares, conversion rates and more. You can create marketing objectives for some of these to monitor your progress towards achieving your business goals and mission.

You should also track which pages people are leaving from and identify the ones with high exit rates. Naturally, the homepage will have a higher exit rate than other pages, and that's because it's also the most visited page on the website. Also, your conversion pages like 'thank you' and 'success' pages that people see after completing a transaction or registration will have high exit rates too. However, look for ways to reduce this by cross-selling other products or services that may be of interest to them.

You can't track and report on all of them though, and you should focus on the most important ones. So, start by creating marketing objectives that detail what you want to achieve and by when with your content. For example, you could have an objective to reduce bounce rates below 50% within 6 months. Then, you should create key performance indicators (KPIs) that track your progress towards achieving your objectives.

Get ideas from competitors

Your competitors will also have website content ideas that are effective in attracting repeat visitors to their websites. You can monitor their websites to see how often they publish their content and what type it is, then look at their metrics on tools like Alexa to see how effective they are at visitor acquisition and retention.

Search engine organic traffic is a major reason many businesses produce content. It helps to rank higher in the search engines and target long tail keywords that are profitable for your business. Most of your competitors will be creating content and implementing search engine optimisation tactics to achieve high rankings.

It's easy to identify competitors from search results because they will have high positions for the keywords that you want to rank on. And it is also easy to identify the tactics they are using such as link building, rate of content updates, website structure, etc. There are many tools to help you monitor their SEO strategies, and these include Alexa and SEO Book.

Create engaging content

You shouldn't create content just for the sake of it. Your content should be of the highest quality and should keep people coming back for more. You can keep track of metrics like bounce rates, average pageviews and time on site in Analytics to see how effective your content is at engaging visitors.

From your analytics reports, you can see which landing pages and content your website are most interested in by looking at engagement metrics such as bounce rates, pages per

session and time on site.

You can also assess the keywords that are driving traffic to your website and then create blog posts related to these searches.

Create visual infographic

Infographics are popular with many people, and you can submit yours to sites like Pinterest and Slideshare. So, find out what's trending in your industry and create a quality infographic that will interest your target audiences.

Post it to Twitter with Hootsuite

Use a tool like Hootsuite or Buffer to post all your content to Twitter and LinkedIn to see an increase in followers and boost to your website traffic. Hootsuite is a scheduling tool that saves you a lot of time and allows you to post your content when most of your followers are available or any time that you like.

Create a video of your best articles

Create a 'how to' video of your best content and publish it on YouTube. Many of your target audiences will prefer to watch than to read and if you have no videos, you will lose out to your competitors. Creating a video is cheap, and it will take a few hours to complete.

Compile Top 10 Lists

Top 10 lists are popular, and they are some of the most read content types on the web. They are easy to write too and rank high on search engines.

Find quality images

Use sites like Pexels and Picjumbo to find quality images for your blog posts. Finding quality images can be a daunting task and many good ones are not free. But using these free sites and others, you can find images that you do not need to credit the author.

Write follow-up post

For your most popular content, you should create follow-up posts that will draw them back to your site to subscribe to your blog and newsletter.

Recycle your content

Turn your blog posts or articles into ebooks, whitepapers, infographics, or presentations and share them on Slideshare, Linkedin, Twitter and other sites to gain more visitors to your website. For example, you can turn a blog post into a video to publish on YouTube, create a powerpoint presentation of it and upload it to Slideshare, restructure it for LinkedIn and other social accounts and include some of it in an ebook to sell on Amazon Kindle.

Giving your content away as a whitepaper, infographic or ebook is one of the effective ways to increase visitors – and for people to sign up to your emails. This is potentially more effective than selling it for a low price because it will help you to grow your list, which you can market to later.

Structure appropriately

You should decide how your pages will be structured on your website for easy navigation by your visitors. Also, each page should include H1, H2 tags, paragraphs, and images structured for easy reading, and meant to increase your visitor retention.

Features vs. Benefits

It's crucial for your marketing efforts to understand the difference between features and benefits. Features are factual statements about your products or services and they are often technical statements and aren't what entice customers to buy.

However, benefits are what visitors are interested in, and it is this that you should include in your content. Your visitors will be asking, 'What's in it for me?' as they access your content.

Promoting your content

Promoting your content is an important part of your content marketing plan. There are many channels to choose from including social media, video marketing, organic, pay per click advertising, press releases, email marketing and it may not be possible for your business to implement all of these because of budget constraints, target market needs and expertise.

For video, YouTube is a good channel to promote your products or services and inform and educate customers. Its audiovisual capabilities are unmatched by other channels and it helps you to create a lasting impression, build relationships and increase brand awareness.

Hire a copywriter

Digital copywriters produce copy for a wide range of clients in different formats for all kinds of online channels like search engine marketing (SEM), social media, websites, banners and much more. So if you plan to work with a digital copywriter, it's important to create your objectives first and then choose the channels that you want your copy for.

Digital copywriting rates differ, with some copywriters charging per word, some charging per hour and still others charging per page. It all depends on the type of writing required, the volume of work and where it is to be used. Every writer has a unique writing style, and that's true for copywriters too and some can adapt theirs to suit the project at hand. However, you should check their previous work to ensure that it fits with what you require.

Work with a brief

Always work with a brief and be clear with the copywriter what the expectations are and what the copy is to achieve. The copywriting brief should include details of who the target market is, where to use the copy – is it for the website, social platforms, banners, etc. – how many words are required and what the objectives are.

A brief also helps the copywriter to have a reference document that covers all key areas and will eliminate many back and forth emails and phone calls.

Most importantly, the digital copywriter should understand the audience they are writing for and then develop a tone and style that matches the brand and resonates with the prospects.

SEO Website Copy

Most copywriters focus on writing copy for websites especially if it's for search engine optimisation (SEO) purposes – to rank sites higher in the organic search results. With the intense competition for the attention of website visitors, website copy should be of the highest quality and should include the keywords that your website needs to ranks for – with a keyword density between 3 and 5%.

Written Website copy should be for:

- Title tags – this is the first thing people see in the search results

- Description meta tag – this is the second most important element in search engine results (SERPS)

- H1 tag – the main title of the landing page which should include the main keyword

- H2, H3, etc. tags – these are subsequent headings that should include secondary keywords

- Body copy – the bulk of the website content which should ideally have a minimum of 300 words include a call to action, and the keywords included at a density between 3-5%.

There are many other copywriting website elements including product pages for an e-commerce store, corporate text, etc.

Personalised

Personalised website content creates a great user experience for visitors and leads to greater interaction and more return visits. Personalisation is popular in online consumer portals, and one prominent retailer that does it effectively is Amazon.co.uk.

The aim of online personalisation is to create extra value for the visitor and customer by reducing the time it takes to complete tasks like finding products, buying related products, remembering past interests and so on.

Easy to Find

Content should be easily accessible on your website, and that means visitors should not spend a considerable length of timing trying to get to the information that they need. This is why navigation is a critical factor in the quality of content on your site, and this is important for both search engine bots and humans.

Depending on the sector and industry you are in, a wide or deep website structure may be important or a combination of the two. A deep structure is more common for e-commerce sites that sell thousands of products, and the layout of the site will affect the user experience and the satisfaction with your content.

Timely

Content produced should be submitted and promoted on time to reach your target

audiences when they are most receptive to it. This is where a content calendar is helpful because you can plan your content strategy for the year and factor in holidays and seasons to promote it. With such a plan in place, you will produce quality content that will help to connect with your prospects.

Up to date

Regular blogging helps to keep your content fresh and up to date. It gives visitors confidence that they will find relevant and timely content about whatever topic you write about. Also, you should regularly update your other content like website text, images and graphics regularly to ensure that they are relevant when people access it. If visitors and search engine bots find old dates on your content, they are unlikely to return to read it and index it, and this will lead to a drop in visitors and customers.

Accurate

Check all facts to make sure that they are correct and verify that anything uploaded to your site is factual and has no errors. Errors and misinformation can lessen visitor trust and could also lead to complaints that reduce the chances you have to build relationships and retain customers. Also, factual content increases trust and helps to spread the word about your website and offers – to your visitors' circles.

Clear

Explained points and facts should be clear, and should leave no ambiguity. Your target audience should understand your content and you should keep technical jargon to a minimum especially if they have to search around looking for further explanation of your content. Grammar and spelling should be 100% correct, as this is an important factor for search engine rankings and building confidence with your target audiences.

Detailed

You should have a detailed website content that your readers should not have to turn to other sources to look for more information – unless that is one of your goals.

Relevant

It should be created specifically for the people you want to reach and no one else, and they should be able to get it as soon as they land on your website.

Customisable content

Online personalisation and customisation are big in online retail, and it helps customers to find what they need and benefit from other offers that you provide. An example of customisation is displaying similar products to the one that your visitor is currently viewing or showing products that others have purchased in that category. This is known as cross-selling and leads to greater customer satisfaction and more return visits.

Frequently updated

Visitors will return to your website if you update it regularly with new content like blog posts. Regular blogging regularly is effective at achieving this, and one post a week should be sufficient to keep your content fresh and up to date and to inspire confidence in your prospects to return. When people visit your site and find that your blog posts are months

or even years old, they are unlikely to return to your blog.

Quality website content

There is no substitute for high-quality website content that is targeted and relevant to your audiences. This is the number one reason people return to websites to read and interact with content. Content can be of any type and can include website text, blog posts, downloadable files, whitepapers, case studies, infographics etc and it all depends on your industry and sector and what your target market requires.

Quick to load

Slow loading pages are one of the main reasons people never return to websites, especially if there are competitor sites that have similar information, products and services that they can access. Pages should load under 5 seconds, and this is achievable when you use tools like Google Developer PageSpeed Insights to identify the reasons your site is loading slowly. Some ways to improve page speed include browser caching, compressing resources and eliminating render-blocking JavaScript and CSS in above-the-fold content

Generate Response

To generate responses on your landing page, you should have a prominent call to action that states whether you want your visitors to purchase, download, contact, register, signup or whatever other activity is essential to your business.

There are multiple places on the page to place your call to action, and some are effective while some are not, and it all depends on the layout of your page and the call to action itself. A good tactic is to add it above the fold where it can be seen as visitors land and then place it in the middle of the text and at the end of your content. Also, you should consider repeating it as both text and image.

Engage different audience segments

Pages should have the right combination of headings and sub-headings to show visitors that they are in the right place. They should know within a split second what the page is about and whether it is relevant to their need. Ideally, each page should focus on one audience and also describe the benefits that they will get from your business – and other pages should concentrate on other segments.

Your objective should be to reduce bounce rates and increase visitor return rates.

Answer Visitors' questions

Different visitors to your landing pages will want to know different things and have their questions answered immediately. Your pages should provide the info they need or explain how they can get it from other areas of your site or by other methods like chat and customer phone support. FAQs can be very helpful, and these should be prominent on your site.

Communicate key brand messages

The goal here is to increase brand familiarity and favourability, and it should explain who you are, what you do, where you operate, what you offer and most importantly how your prospects can benefit. You should consider using testimonials, reviews, ratings and other

independent endorsements to increase your credibility.

Knowing what is most important to your audiences helps you to communicate key brand messages that will resonate with them.

Showcase product offers

Use landing pages to cross-sell similar products that your visitors and customers will be interested in and also to up-sell to existing customers by encouraging them to upgrade. Also, provide coupons and discounts that are effective incentives to get people to buy and to return to your site for more offers.

Attract visitors through SEO

Optimise your landing pages for the keywords that are relevant to your business to achieve high search rankings and attract high traffic volumes. Also, your navigation, copy and page elements should make it easy for search engines to index your pages and rank them higher. So, on-page optimisation should be a proper strategy for your business to help make your pages relevant to visitors and search engines.

Engage with commenters

Respond to comments, questions, and discussions on your blog and engage your visitors. This helps to build relationships and leads to more visitors and higher visitor return rates too.

Add tags

Tags help visitors to find what they need on your blog without clicking from page to page. Tags are keywords or labels that group related blog posts in one section based on those keywords for the purpose of identification. Your tag list should prominently be placed on your blog where visitors can easily see them and click through to the content they need.

Include a search button

As your blog grows with more categories and pages for visitors to scroll through, make it easy for them by adding a search button. So, this will turn your blog into a mini search engine that makes it easy for visitors to find what they want and also give them confidence that your blog is active and relevant.

Another benefit of adding search functionality is that you can find out which search terms people are using to look for information on your blog. Make sure you set this up correctly in your Google Analytics account in the admin section. So, this empowers you to write more targeted content in the future.

Add author bio

Add your author bio and include a photo so that your visitors can know who you are and feel more engaged with your blog. Your bio should include a description of what you do and offer, what your experience is and a list of other posts that you have written.

Sign up to Disqus

Disqus is a blog commenting service for websites that includes many powerful features beyond the standard commenting features on your blog. It makes it easy for your visitors

to leave comments and discover more relevant content on your website.

Include social share buttons

Adding social love buttons is easy nowadays especially if your site is on WordPress.org. There are hundreds of plug-ins to download, and you can check their reviews to see what their performance and features look like. These plug-ins include all the major social media sites including Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, Facebook, etc. and you should choose only those that are relevant to you, and you are also active on.

Google Analytics

Launch Google Analytics

Google Analytics is the web's number 1 reporting tool. What makes it unique is the huge number of features and reports that it provides, and best of all is that it is free. There is a premium version for extremely high volume sites that receive over 10 million sessions, page views, etc. per month.

Some things you can achieve with Google Analytics includes:

- Measuring your ROI and improving it

- Greater insight into how your campaigns are performing

- Hundreds of Segmentation variables on traffic and actions on your website

- Setting goals and e-commerce tracking

- Setting up remarketing/retargeting campaigns

- Insight into which channels are contributing to most conversions

- Track and measure key metrics such as bounce rates, page views, time on site, etc.

- And hundreds of other examples

Add goal tracking

In Google Analytics, you can track just about any action that takes place on your website including events that don't lead to a page view. You can track sales, downloads, contacts, signups, registrations, likes and much more. And you will then have important metrics like conversion rate, cost per conversion and the number of conversions to measure your online campaigns.

Analyse multi-channels reports in analytics

Multi-channels funnels report is an advanced feature that helps you understand the channels that are contributing to transactions and goal conversions on your website. It's now the case that people are using multiple channels like cpc, organic, direct, email, social networks and others in combination, as they seek information and make purchases. So, looking at this report and studying it will help you with effective budget allocation and putting into the channels that work best for you.

Attribution

Before you discount any traffic source or medium, whether it's PPC, Organic, Referrals, Direct Visitors or Social Network, you need to understand the path to purchase and how each source contributes to this.

Looking at the following 'Top Conversion Paths' report in 'Multi-Channel Funnels' in Analytics for a shopping site, you can see that 'Organic' traffic contributed to 18 transactions.

However, if you were using a 'Last Interaction' attribution model, you would assume that Organic traffic is not leading to any conversions, and the natural thing to do would be to abandon all Search Engine Optimisation work that is being done. Many marketers would divert funds to other activities like PPC which according to the above report shows that it has contributed to just only two more goal conversions than Organic.

In fact, if you use the last interaction model, referral traffic is performing better than Organic here, and that is not an accurate picture of what is happening. So, it's important to look at the models such as 'First Interaction' which shows an entirely different picture – and reveals that Organic traffic is crucial to this website.

As the above reports reveal, a multi-channel strategy is critical to increasing conversions, and improving ROI.

And this hasn't taken into consideration all those visitors who delete cookies between their visits and visitors who use multiple devices in their search for products or services and which is quite difficult to track across devices at the moment.

Bounce rate

This is a top engagement metric in your analytics reports, and it's one that many online marketers and analytics users are familiar with. It is defined simply as the percentage of single page views in which the person left your site from the entrance page without interacting with the page.

Benchmark -•- Your site

90.00%   90.00%

46.00%   45.00%

69.09% Bounce Rate

Benchmark: 40.23% **(+71.74%)**

Also see the Top Landing Pages report for additional analysis of this metric.
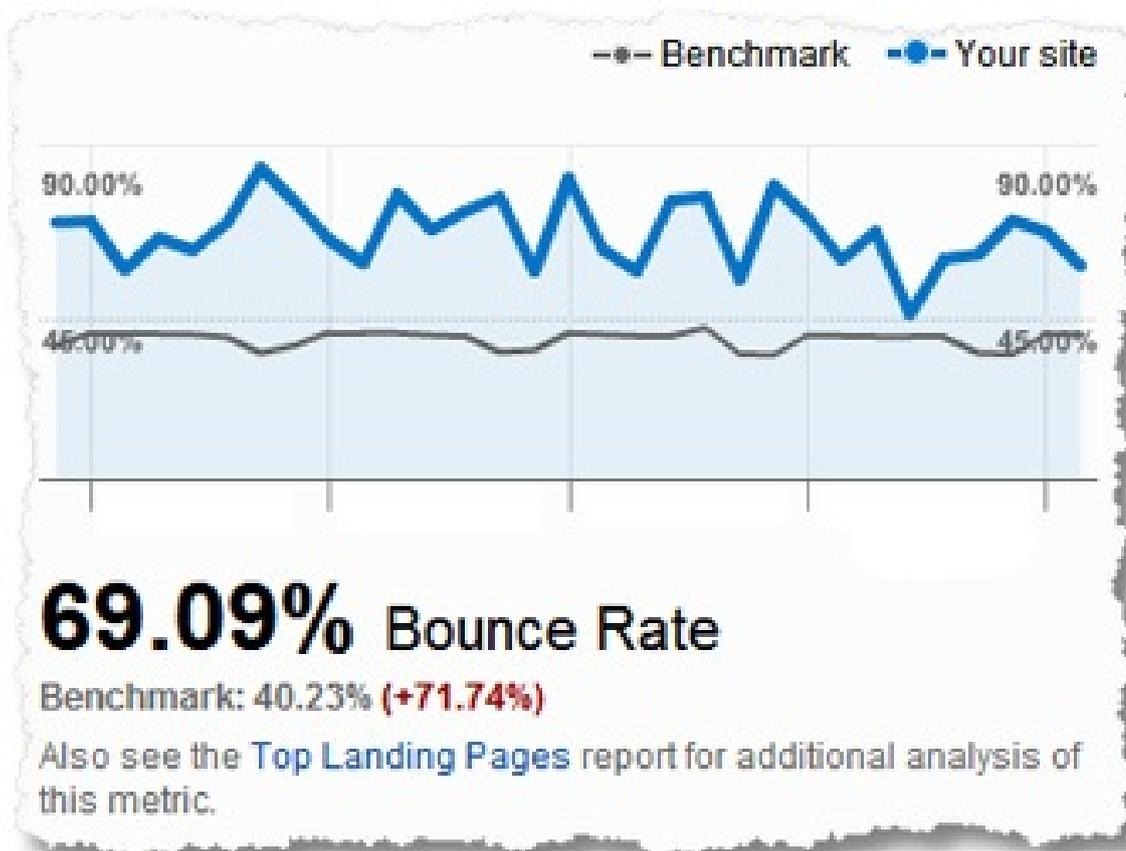
What constitutes a good bounce rate varies from industry to industry, and there are many opinions about what a good one is. I've found that on average, a bounce rate above 60% is not good for many websites especially considering that almost all websites have a feature they can track whether it's a purchase, registration, signup, download, contact page and so on.

Sessions

A session is shown for the date range you have selected in your analytics interface, and it is a period in which a visitor is engaged with your website or app, and that includes a screen view, event, e-commerce, etc. and all these are associated with sessions. This is an acquisition metric and shows how effective your site is at acquiring visitors and how engaged they are.

Visits	Unique Visitors	
Sessions	**Users**	**Pageviews**
44,105	28,745	102,931

Pages / Session	**Avg. Session Duration**	**Bounce Rate**
2.33	00:02:36	60.34%

% New Sessions

64.85%
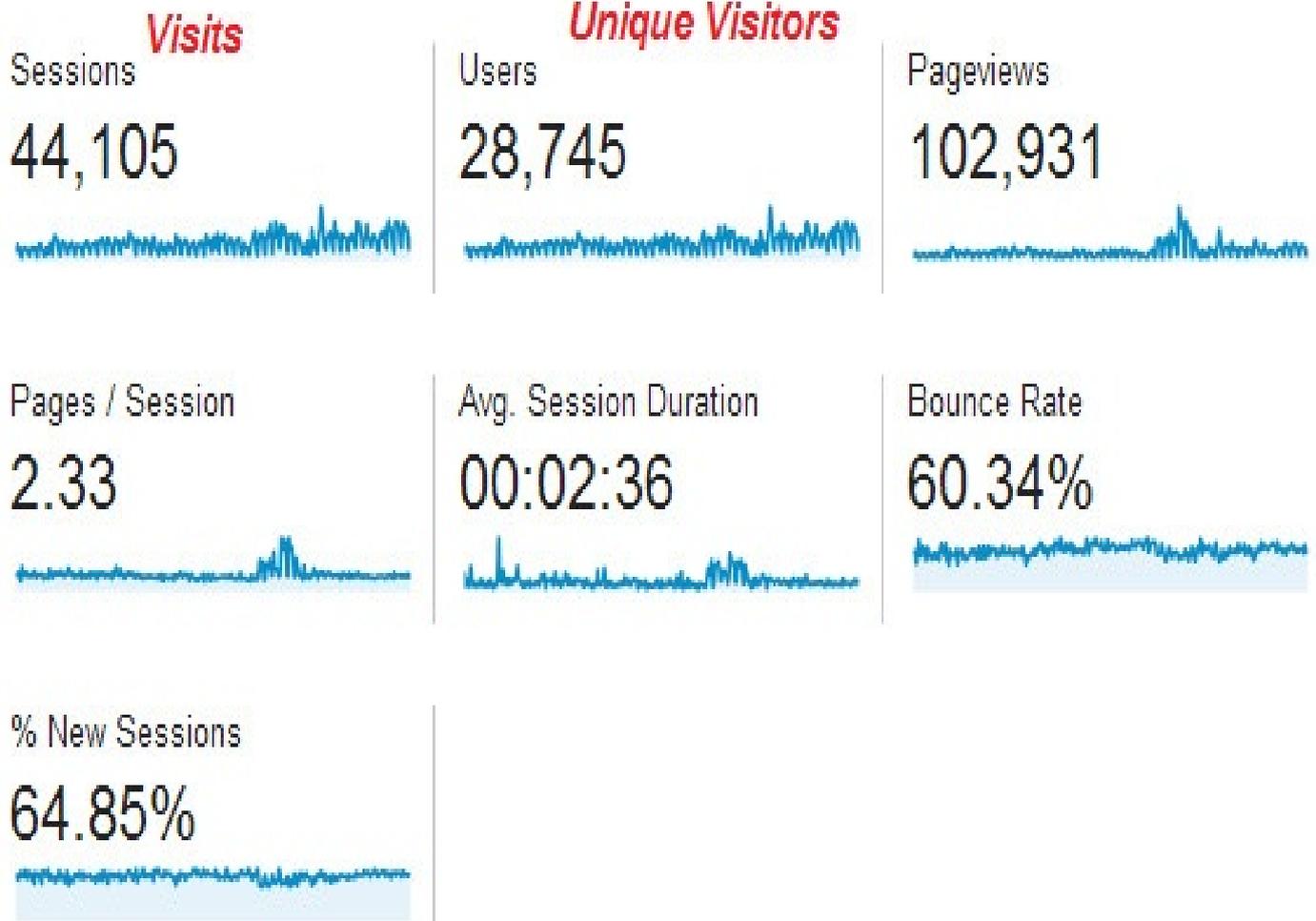
Click Through Rate (CTR)

This is an important metric that you won't see in analytics, and it is usually associated with Google Adwords. It shows how effective your ads are at getting viewers to click through to your website. You can calculate it yourself in analytics for your Adwords traffic by driving clicks by impressions

CTR = Clicks / Impressions

New vs. Returning Visitors

This metric is unique, and it measures customer and visitor loyalty and how effective you are at retention. The higher the percentage of return visitors to your site, then that's usually a sign of high visitor retention. However, that all depends on your goals and the age of your website. For example, if your launched site is recent with few visitors, there will naturally be a higher percentage of new visitors, and that's also true if you have significantly increased advertising to new market segments.
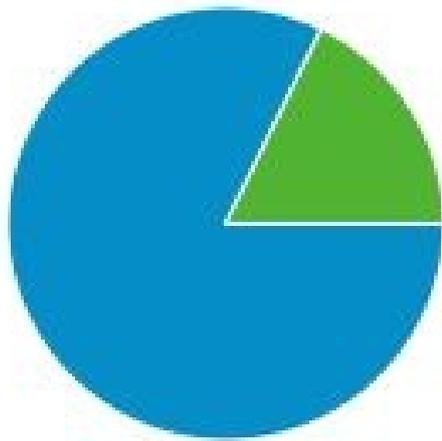
Goal Conversion Rate

This is a top level analytics metrics that is a clear indicator of how your website and advertising are performing. It shows the percentage of visitors who complete a goal on your website like downloads, purchases, registrations, etc. and to start tracking this; you need to set up your goals in the admin section of your account. You can also import your PPC goals into Adwords to see how your ads, keywords, ad groups and campaigns are performing.

Goal Conversions

Goal conversions are related to goal conversion rate, and it shows how many goals have been completed on your site.

Average Time on Page

This is another top engagement metric, and it measures a number of time visitors spent viewing a specific page on your website. It's available for all pages that are tracked on your site, and you can view it by clicking Behaviour > Site Content > All Pages. This metric is important because it shows how engaged people are on your landing pages and if they arrive and leave quickly, then it's likely that some optimisation will help to improve engagement.

Percentage Exit (% Exit)

Percentage exit shows the percentage of people that exit a particular page or set of pages. It's calculated as the number of exits divided by the number of page views for the page or set of pages. This is a behavioural and engagement metric, and it shows how useful various pages on your site are at retaining visitors. For some pages like the homepage, 'thank you' page and payment success page, % exits will be high and this is expected because your visitors will have completed an action and then they will close the page. For other pages on your site that have high % Exits, you should investigate to see how you can improve the text, images, offers, call to action and other elements that help to improve the user experience.

$$\frac{\text{Number of exits}}{\text{Total Page Views}} = \% \text{ Exits}$$

Online Branding

Position your brand

Positioning your brand is about occupying a position in the mind of your prospects that differentiates it from competitor brands. This is one of the difficult things about creating a successful brand whether that's online or offline. There are many competitors out there vying for the same customers that your business is targeting, so to reach them, grab their attention and create an online value proposition that is unique and of paramount importance when you introduce your brand to the market.

Create a consistent brand identity

Your brand identity is a collection of all the physical and emotional attributes of your brand. These include your name, logo, colours, tagline, images, sounds and smell that your target audience can feel, touch, sense, hear, smell and see. Depending on the nature of your business, some of these will be more important than others. For example, a perfume manufacturer will have a smell as a primary brand identity element. Together, these brand elements combine to create a compelling offer that is irresistible and unforgettable with your target audience and hopefully leads to brand preference at the time of purchase.

Pick a winning name

A name is the most important feature of the brand identities of most brands. It's one of the easiest things that people will recall about your brand and here are some guidelines to construct yours:

- It should be unique

- Easy to remember

- Should be short

- Easy to pronounce

Register your brand

You can register your brand name and brand mark with the trademark registration organisation International Property Organisation (IPO) to give you exclusive ownership of its use and enforce anyone who uses it without your permission. It also helps to ensure that you don't suffer litigation from anyone who claims to own it.

Secure domain names

As you research your brand, you should also check that domain names are available to register or have the financial resources to buy them from current owners. The two main top level domain names are .com and .co.uk for UK brands or the equivalent in your country and move quickly to register these as you wait for the acceptance of your trademark registration. Also, register other domains like .net, .biz and .org to ensure that your competitors don't try to steal some of your traffic. It may also be worth registering close variant domain names to protect your name and not lose traffic to other sites when people misspell your name.

Promote your online value proposition (OVP)

Use every opportunity to promote your OVP that includes all the benefits that your target markets need or want. Your OVP is a combination of your unique selling proposition that differentiates your brand from competitor brands and the benefits that are of importance to your customers and are also your strengths. With a strong OVP, your business will be more profitable, and you will stand out from competitors and this will lead to greater market share.

Create brand rules

Your brand rules state how your organisation will use your brand identity, staff, partners and other stakeholders for advertising, in communications and wherever prospects come in touch with your brand on the web. This is especially important if you work with designers, freelancers and agencies and you can create a document stating how your logo and other brand identities are to be used in all communications.

Create a video

Video is powerful for putting across your concepts, ideas, products or services because of its audio and visual elements. There has been an explosion in video production over the last 5 years, and YouTube is now the world's second largest search engine.

There are many free tools to use to create a video, and even professionally created ones are cheap and will do wonders for your business.

Online Press Release Campaign

If you are about to launch a new product or service, don't lose the opportunity to create buzz around it by releasing a press release. However, you should state how it benefits your customers or the general public and make it newsworthy too.

If you have little experience running a press release, it's best that you hire a PR expert or use a service like http://www.prnewswire.co.uk

Create YouTube Channel

YouTube is now the second largest search engine and is catching up fast with Google Search, so it can't be ignored. This tool is effective in increasing brand awareness, and if you have a product or service you are launching or just need to educate your target market on your products, then this is the place to be. It's now much cheaper to create professional videos, and there are freelancers on sites like Fiverr and People Per Hour that can create your videos for a low fee and upload them to YouTube.

You can also create a video campaign in Adwords and promote your video to any or all audiences.

Stay Alert

Keep track of any news about your brand, company and products by signing up to Google Alerts. It will help you with online brand management, and you can quickly respond to any comments or questions people have about your offers. It also helps you to keep a close eye on competitors and on what is happening in your industry.

Advertising Budget

One significant error made by countless online brands is to set a low budget for their advertising and branding campaigns. This makes achieving marketing objectives almost impossible when there are insufficient resources to implement the online strategy and the tactics.

Also, the budget should meet or exceed competitor budgets because they will be chasing the same customers and it's important that you have the resources to promote your products or services.

Consistent brand messages

Inconsistent messages lead to dilution of your brand values and leads to confusion with your target markets. Wherever your brand is represented, whether that's your website, social media platforms or in your advertising such as pay per click advertising, you should have a consistent brand identity that resonates with target audiences and positions your brand as the solution to their wants and needs.

Overall, you should stick to the promise that your brand makes. Whether that is always low prices or a premium quality service or whatever that is, you should maintain it in all communications.

Brand identity

Your brand identity includes all visible elements of your brand such as your name, logo, tagline, colours, fonts, images and any other physical attributes. This is what target markets associate with your brand, and it represents in a tangible way the promise that your business makes.

However, some businesses take shortcuts when creating their brand identity and will often create their logo or hire an inexperienced designer to create an impressive brand mark and logo. This requires expert help, and it's important that you hire a proven team of experts to contribute to creating all aspects of your brand.

Register domain names

When you create your brand and are ready to launch it to the world, it's likely you would have registered the main domain extensions like .com and .net and your country level domain like .co.uk for the United Kingdom. However, you should register as many extensions that are available including .biz and .org so that you can prevent people from registering these names and setting up rival websites that will steal your traffic and customers.

Without securing all domains including close variants you risk losing traffic in the search engine results, especially when competitors rank high for the sites that they launch.

Build Awareness

If the objective is to build awareness, then decisions should be made about what percentage of the target market should be made aware of the brand and by when. This will often be at the launch of the brand when it has zero awareness with potential customers, so the business has to create a strategy about how this awareness will be achieved and by

when. An example of a brand awareness objective is: "Achieve 70% brand awareness with online customers by December 2016."

This brand strategy objective will require specific online channels and tools to launch and manage and some of the main ones like display advertising, social media marketing and Online PR. With display advertising, for example, Google Display Network campaigns can be launched which focus exclusively on banner ads placed on sites that closely relate to the business and its target markets.

Channels like search advertising are not as effective at raising brand awareness because the target customers need to be aware first of the brand before people can start searching for it. However, there are generic search terms that people will be searching with, and these can be included in search campaigns to promote the new brand.

Create an emotional connection

Creating an emotional connection with target markets is not possible for all types of brands especially with business brand names acquired for business operations. However, with many consumer brands, creating emotional connections is common with many large brands like Apple, Coke, BMW, Disney and others, and it is possible for a wide range of businesses that operate in the digital sphere.

Here, experience is of paramount importance, and this should be the objective of the website and landing pages to create an experience that leads to high visitor engagement and high customer retention. Social media is also a good channel to highlight the benefits of the brand and create buzz around its attributes.

Convey distinguishing attributes

The positioned brand should be providing greater value than what competitor offers, not just in price and discounts, but in benefits offered and advantages that customers get from acquiring the brand and not competitors'.

The brand identity should be unique and appealing, and it should highlight the values that it stands for. In communications and promotions, the distinguishing attributes should be highlighted and demonstrated to show how they trump competitor attributes.

Gain credibility and trust

To gain credibility and trust, the brand should live up to its promises. If the promise is to deliver products within 24 hours of purchase, for example, then this should be its number one objective and all operations should be focused on achieving this. Anything less than the promise that the target customers have bought into, will lead to frustration and lack of trust and credibility.

The website is important here too and should include all features that help to build trust such as secure pages, info and FAQ pages, customer contact details, fast loading pages, proper navigation and so on.

All claims made in advertising campaigns, particularly in pay per click advertising should be delivered within one click of the ad. If not, then visitors will bounce and never return, and you will accrue costs but no sales from your campaigns.

Achieve buyer preference

One benefit of creating a brand especially online is that it makes achieving buyer preference easier for the brand. Customers are more likely to trust a brand they are familiar with and are willing to pay more to acquire them.

Email Marketing

Email Marketing Benefits

Email marketing is one of the most effective internet marketing strategies for a wide range of businesses and that's because it is effective at creating and maintaining customer loyalty. It's also a great vehicle for creating customer advocates that will recommend you to friends, family and colleagues.

It has many other benefits and these include:

- Relatively cheap to implement

- Highly measurable

- Creates trust and builds relationships

- Highly profitable

- Easy to set up and manage

- No steep learning curve

However, email marketing has its detractors, and they highlight that it leads to spam; it is not effective, and it annoys loyal customers. My experience is very different though and I've found it to be one of the most effective direct marketing tools

Capture emails on your website

Set up a newsletter box for people to sign up to on your website. You will be amazed how that could lead to greater profitability when you market to a list that has shown a lot of interest in what you have to offer.

There are many free and low priced email programs to help you with this, including Mailchimp and Aweber and setting up your lists and campaigns is easy.

If you are not capturing emails on your website, then you are losing out on a big opportunity to increase sales or leads for your business. There are many free plug-ins on platforms like WordPress such as Mailmunch that will help you to capture emails and then market to them your products or services. The return on investment for email marketing is unmatched by most other forms of online marketing tactics especially for B2B businesses.

Incentive (Offer)

Always think about the benefits that your subscribers will get from your email. So, you should include a big benefit or incentive to encourage click through to your website and make a purchase or download or other action that you require. Examples of effective email incentives include coupons, vouchers, discount, free offer, free whitepaper, free ebook, prize draw and other similar ones. You could also have multiple calls to action because this is likely to increase clicks to your site or a call from them too.

Targeting and Timing

Emails should be targeted at the right people and at a time when they are most likely to open and respond. Timing includes specific hours of the day when your recipients are

available and also days of the weeks that have a higher response rate in your industry. It also includes the time in the month and the time of the year, especially around particular events or holidays like Christmas, for retailers.

You should also consider their time zone especially if you are mailing to people in a different country or region.

Integration

Integration of email campaigns should be with other communication channels, and branding should be consistent across all platforms and touch points including advertising. It should also be integrated with offline marketing campaigns and should fit in with these communications.

Copy

This is part of the creative and mostly includes text that should be written to a high standard and appeal to the target audience. It should include a well-written subject line that passes spam filters, a heading that creates awareness and interest, text in bullet points that increase desire and a call to action that links to your website or other resources. Copywriting is a specialised skill, and you should hire or engage a professional writer in producing your copy.

Attributes

Assess your email including the 'from', subject line, address, date/time, format (HTML or text) to ensure that it is targeted and effective. You should send out Multipart/MIME messages that can display text or HTML according to the email readers capability.

Landing Page or microsite

Ensure a well-designed landing page or microsite that recipients click-through to, and include offers and promises that you made in your email. This helps to increase engagement, build trust, boost sales and reduce bounce rates. The opposite is that you could see a high unsubscribe rate and some recipients marking your email as spam

Creative

It's important to get the design of the email including its layout, colour and image right to increase engagement and clicks to your website. The design should be simple and easy to understand, and it should match the brand image of your website and other online contact points of your business. One effective design structure is to mirror the website and this increases trust with recipients and reinforces your brand image.

Relevance

For your email campaigns to be successful, your offers and promotions should meet the needs and wants of your target markets. If they have opted-in on your website, then you have a higher list quality than a rented or cold list, and you will have a better understanding of what they require. So, it's important that your lists are highly segmented and that you promote offers that closely match their needs and wants.

Relatively low cost of fulfillment

Compared to other online channels, email marketing is relatively low cost to implement

and manage, and its returns are high too. This is especially the case with an in-house list of subscribers, customers and lists built from business connections. With cold or rented list where recipients are not familiar with the business or have little knowledge of it, then returns are usually lower, and costs are higher, but overall it is an effective marketing strategy.

Email is much cheaper than other direct marketing tactics like direct mail because there is no cost of postage or costs to create leaflets, letters, brochures and other promotional materials. The only costs you are likely to incur are from email platforms like Mailchimp and Constant Contact.

Direct response

Email is primarily a direct response medium and it's used much less for brand awareness. As a direct response medium, it encourages immediate action like making a purchase. Prospects who sign up to your emails usually have one goal in mind – to receive discounts, for product notifications, get coupons, receive deals – and any other offers that they can purchase, download, acquire, etc.

So, all email communications should have a call to action, and this includes links to your website where they can place an order or a telephone number in the email to contact your business and place an order. However, calls to action are many, and it all depends on your business sector and industry.

Fast campaign deployment

Email is fast to create and deploy. One feature that helps this is the many templates that are ready-made to create effective emails for your business. You can also create custom templates in Mailchimp and use them regularly to promote your offers.

Ease of personalisation

Email marketing is one of the best channels, both online and offline, for personalisation. Every aspect of email can be personalised, including:

- the recipients name,

- offers they are interested in or likely to be interested in,

- time when they receive emails

- frequency of communications

- and much more

Options for testing

Email provides many options for testing various features like offers, subject lines, words, calls to action, content and a whole lot more. This helps you to improve your email communications and increase engagement and click-through to your website. Testing with email is cheap too unlike many other forms of advertising where costs are accrued during the tests.

Integration

Email can easily be integrated in a digital marketing strategy whether that's for a B2B or B2C business. Integrating email helps to increase customer and visitor loyalty and leads to greater sales and revenue for your business.

Regular newsletter

For businesses of all sizes and sectors, a regular newsletter is an effective way to keep in touch with customers, employees, suppliers, investors and other target audiences. You can create a targeted newsletter for each of these stakeholders to keep them engaged and build relationships that will be profitable for your business.

Creating a newsletter is easy, and you can add an opt-in form to your website that has a good incentive and then create newsletter templates in your email program (Constant Contact, Mailchimp, etc.) and send a newsletter once a month, once a week or whenever is best for your target audience.

Customer survey

Survey programs like Survey Monkey help you to create easily a survey with multiple questions that you can add to your website or email to your clients or contacts. It has features that allow you to email your survey directly to your contacts.

Welcome message

A welcome email is a standard tactic to send out when a visitor has registered or placed an order on your website or via telephone. This is usually automated to speed up the process and to send the recipient a summary of what they have purchased, when to expect their order and as a reference for the order they have just placed.

Limited-time offer

With an in-house list, you can quickly promote offers that have a limited time and increase sales for a very low cost. Emails are cheap to send out, and they are able to grab the recipient's attention and lead to a high conversion rate especially if they offer great value to your target customers.

Purchase confirmation

This is another standard email communication that is essential to customers who have just placed an order. It helps to build trust and confidence with your business and customers can use the details there to contact you if they have a query or need to update their order.

Winning back lapsed customers

Some of your loyal customers will from time to time lapse, and it's important that you keep in touch with them and encourage repeat purchases through incentives. You can segment these customers and send automated messages reminding them of the benefits of shopping with your business and incentivise them with a voucher to encourage a purchase.

Newsletter segmented by purchase habits

For automation purposes and efficiency, you should segment your visitors and customers to ensure that you are sending targeted messages to each segment. Segmentation is not as

advanced with a standard email list as it is with a database of customers. The two are different, and it's important to understand how you will manage each and how you will segment customers and subscribers.

Top performers

Your website should highlight the top performing products based on past purchases, and you should email this to your customers to encourage purchases of products that they are likely to be interested in. You can have a top sellers list for each category or a list of top products in the category based on their purchases and send this to your customer base. Amazon does this efficientlly and this type of personalisation leads to higher sales and it's an effective cross-sell strategy.

Birthday/Anniversary greeting or offer

Show your customers that you appreciate their loyalty to your business by sending them a greeting card or offer on important dates like birthdays and anniversary. This ensures that you are always top of mind with your customers, and it reinforces the relationship.

Product replenishment

Offer your visitors and customers an option to be alerted when a product comes back in stock. Then, send them an email when the product is in stock so they can place an order.

Warranty renewal

Email is effective and cheap to remind customers to renew their warranties, compared to telephone and snail mail. However, it is less effective than telephone and response rates are lower, but you can target many customers for a very low cost.

Abandoned cart

People abandon carts for many reasons including delivery charges that are too high, too many steps to checkout, saving it for future purchase, or as part of product and price research. So it's often difficult to know the reason. However, you can email your customers to remind them of items they've put in the cart and even send them a discount to encourage them to complete the order.

Digital Marketing Strategy

Marketing Audit

When you first create your digital marketing strategy, you will carry out an audit into your market, competitors, and the internal and external market environment. This is important to help you understand the needs of your customers, who they are and how you can create an offer to meet that need.

The audit will also highlight who your direct and indirect competitors are and all the competitor forces that could be a threat to your business, such as substitute products, new offers from competitors and new competitors entering your industry.

The marketing audit will help you to assess the external environment which you will have little control over. This includes forces such as Technology and how your target market uses mobile devices, tablets and desktop, for example, to access your website and, therefore, your products or services.

An audit is an ongoing activity, and you will do this throughout the life of your business and continually plug your findings into your digital marketing strategy. It's important to carry out regular audits to keep an eye on your competitors.

Your audit findings will create some very important factors that you will add to your SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats):

Marketing Objectives

With all the info you've gathered from the marketing audit and SWOT, you will have a clear idea of what is happening in the market, so that you can create SMART objectives. SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time related, and they help you stay focused and ensure that you achieve your objectives.

Whatever your objectives, you should take into consideration your available resources such as time and money, to ensure that you can achieve them.

Your objectives should also take into consideration your competitors' current standing in the market, whether they are market leaders, challengers, followers or niches, so you can create Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to benchmark your progress towards achieving your goals and against your competitors and adjust them accordingly.

There are many types of objectives, and many of them fall under acquisition, conversion

and retention strategies. An acquisition objective, for example, would be to see a 20% increase in new visitors to your website by a particular date. Using Google Analytics, you can then create a KPI to benchmark your progress towards achieving this goal using spreadsheets.

Monitor Competitors

Competitors will be working as hard as or even harder than you to win and gain customers and your digital marketing strategy should set out how you plan to counter this. With the help of your marketing audit, you can understand your market's greatest needs and use that to build a competitive advantage.

The problem many businesses have online is that they have no unique benefits, which they can use to create a competitive advantage. Opportunities to create a competitive advantage can come from many areas including quality of service, meeting customers' needs better than competitors, lower prices, cost advantages, offers and discounts and many other ways.

However, price is not usually an advantage, because competitors can often meet or beat prices and this spirals into a price war, where everyone loses, except the customer of course.

Your business strengths combined with your competitive advantage is known as your basis for competing. You need this to win new business, turn them into loyal customers and ultimately convert them into advocates who will bring more business your way.

Online Promotional Tactics

Online promotion is a huge topic on its own, and I cover it many of my case studies, whitepapers, blogs and articles that you can read about here on my website. The ways to promote your website online continue to grow and you should constantly be on the lookout for a way to reach your customers more efficiently and effectively.

Some of the primary promotional tools and channels include:

- Pay Per Click (PPC) Advertising

- Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

- Content Marketing

- Social Media Marketing

- Affiliate Marketing

- Online PR

- Online Sponsorship

- Display Advertising

- Directory Listings

- Online shopping portals

- Email Marketing

- And many others

Digital Marketing Research

The first thing to do is to research your potential customers to find out who they are and what their needs are. This will help you to create a website experience that matches and exceeds their needs and lead to greater profits and ROI for your business.

There are many free research tools that you can use including keyword tools that help you estimate the demand for your products and to understand what your prospects need.

Your research findings will help you to create a blueprint of your website that focuses on your core services, and depending on the industry you are in; it will assist you to layout the structure of your site.

Website Development

Your developer should be up-to-date on the latest designs and should understand the importance of such features as mobile responsiveness. They should be able to advise you on the best website platform to use, and not just one that they use for many other clients.

For example, WordPress is the platform of choice for 23% of websites, and it has many capabilities that far exceed other platforms. You have access to thousands of plug-ins that turn your website into a well-oiled marketing machine, and it is easy to install with a one-click setup.

So, this is one platform you should consider, and your web developer should have lots of experience designing for it and implementing it too.

Publishing your website

Now that your website is ready to publish after a redesign or new build, you should consider creating a newsworthy article in the form of an online press release to raise awareness.

You should hire or employ a copywriter with expertise in writing website content. This will pay huge dividends because they will create compelling messages that match your business needs. When there is a well-done content writing, it creates interested visitors who return for more, and they promote your website to their circles too.

Again, you should have a content strategy in place to publish regular blog posts, articles, case studies and others to gain more exposure and encourage interest in your offers.

Promoting Your Website

Besides the online press release to garner some attention at your launch, your website marketing strategy should include details of how you will promote it to your prospects and bring in lots of sales or leads.

Nowadays, you have many options to promote your site on sites such as Bing and Google with their Pay Per Click (PPC) programs and Organic traffic sources. Initially, you can

launch PPC campaigns to start receiving visitors to your site, while you work on Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) to bring you free organic traffic.

Social Media on Twitter mainly is another way to promote your products and services. There are many other platform;, however you should concentrate on as few as possible to focus your efforts, build a large following and create expertise on that platform.

Another effective promotion tactic that can form a vital part of your website marketing strategy is email marketing. You should build an email list of customers, fans and regular visitors that you can market to, with discounts and offers. Email is effective because these people have shown a high level of trust and interest in signing up to receive your messages

Creates Unity

Your online marketing strategy will help you to create more unity in your marketing team with your marketers, content writers, copywriters, designers and researchers, whether they are in-house, an agency or freelancers.

By sharing your strategy and agreeing on objectives and which markets to target, everyone will be on the same page, and you will see greater unity in the team. This has many benefits including

- More satisfied customers

- Happier staff members

- Greater profitability

- Efficient use of time and money resources

Digital Marketing Strategy Benefits

Keeps You Focused

A plan keeps you focused on what needs to be done and by when. Because you will have goals you want to achieve, you will work on only those tactics that you've identified as necessary to achieving your goals.

You will now be more focused on meeting the needs of your customers because you will have identified who they are and what their wants and needs are.

Improves Performance

With clear objectives and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to benchmark your progress, you will be much closer to improving the performance of your online campaigns. You will also benchmark against your competitors for your important metrics such as sales (conversions), time on site, number of pages visited, bounce rate and many others.

With this data, you can work more efficiently to improve your ads, campaigns and all your online activities.

More Efficient and Effective

An online marketing strategy makes you more cost-efficient on platforms like Google Adwords because you focus on improving the targeting of your campaigns, improving

quality scores and click through rate and it reduces your Cost Per Click (CPC) rate.

Your ads also become more efficient at targeting the right audience, and this is reflected in Click Through Rates (CTR) which will continue to increase. Your strategy will help you to focus on the activities that you need to work on to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

Improves Revenue and Profitability

With better-targeted campaigns and a clearer online focus, this will lead to an improvement in revenue and even more importantly, profitability. Also, you will have more money to add to your online marketing budget so you can be more represented on a broad range of channels and devices.

The importance of this is that people now use a wide range of devices and channels to search, browse, shop on the internet and the more representation on these, the more sales and revenue you will have.

Increase Customer Loyalty

Developing an e-marketing strategy is beneficial in creating customer loyalty because it helps you identify the benefits that they are seeking on your website and all contact points, and then you adjust your offers accordingly.

Email marketing is one of the best channels for visitor and customer retention, and it should be an active part of your strategy whether you are an e-commerce store or B2B business.

With tools like Analytics, you can measure visitor loyalty by using such reports as New vs. Returning Visitors, and you can keep track of the conversion rates of new visitors and returning visitors to see how effective your strategy is.

Meet customer needs

People are bombarded with ads, banners, messages and emails on the Internet. In fact, the average person sees over 3000 adverts per day including offline messages and it's difficult for any one business to attract and engage customers in the midst of all this noise.

So, it's important to ensure that you identify customers who will benefit from what you have to offer and then create a compelling offer that cuts through the noise. Many tools and channels help you do this, including PPC programs like Google Adwords that are effective at reaching people who are searching for your products or services.

Boost Online ROI

Online promotional tools are highly measurable compared to traditional forms of advertising such as TV and print and it's easy to track your spend and measure your returns.

With the help of tools like Google Analytics, you can track how many people see your ads (impressions), how many visit your site from your ads (clicks), how many of these purchase (conversions), how many return (% of return visitors) and a host of other metrics.

So, all this data helps you easily calculate your return on investment and ensures that you are focusing your efforts on channels that are most profitable for your business.

Acquisition Objectives

Acquisition objectives are related to visits to your website, and this includes traffic sources such as Organic, CPC, Referrals, Social Network, Direct Visits and others. You will see these sources in Google Analytics and next to them will be metrics that will also form objectives for your online advertising.

'Visits' is an important metric and should form one of your acquisition objectives. For example, you may want to increase organic traffic volumes to increase its percentage to 20% of all traffic sources.

Conversion Objectives

Conversion objectives relate to purchases, downloads, contacts, registrations, etc. that take place on your website. You can see these conversions for each of your traffic sources, and you can create an objective for your most important conversion type.

So for a key metric like conversion rate, you could have an objective like:

"Increase conversion rate by 25% for organic traffic by Nov 2015."

Retention Objectives

Customer retention is essential to online profitability, and retention objectives will be some of your most important ones. In analytics, you will have engagement metrics like New vs. Returning visitors, bounce rate, average time on site and average pageviews. By measuring these metrics, you will have a clearer idea of how good you are at retaining visitors and customers.

An example of a retention objective is to see a percentage increase in returning visitors for all your traffic sources.

Advocacy Objectives

Tracking customer advocacy on the web is difficult. However, there are a few activities that you can track. For example, you could have a 'Recommend to Friend' button or form that allows users to recommend your products, services, blogs, articles and so on.

Also, positive online reviews are an endorsement of your business, and you want to track these to ensure you are meeting the needs of your customers. So, you can have objectives to see an increase in positive reviews or friend recommendations and then have tasks to help you achieve those objectives.

Get senior level buy-in

Selling the benefits of online promotion channels and vehicles to top managers in your company will be a lot more effective if you have a digital marketing plan that shows what can be achieved, at what cost and by when.

Create a digital marketing plan

Your digital marketing plan will include the following:

a. Where are we now?

To answer this question, you need to carry out a health and wealth of your business's

online environment. That means you need to find out how you are performing against competitors and what position you have – are you a market leader, challenger or follower?

This is an audit and analysis, and you will need to answer questions like:

– Who are our customers?

– What do they need and want from us?

– How will we target them? – which devices and online channels?

– What messages do they respond to? Offers, quality service, delivery, etc.

– Who are our competitors and how well equipped are they?

b. Where do we want to be?

Your answer to the question "where are we now?" will help you create online marketing objectives and these will set out what you want to achieve online.

Now that you know who your customers are, you will then need to assess who are your most profitable clients and how you should target them. So you will segment them, and you can do this for all visitors to your site based on how engaged they are and what actions they take on your site (pageviews, transactions, spend, time on site etc.).

Your findings will help you to create objectives that are SMART – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time Related and you will formulate your digital marketing strategy at this stage too.

c. How might we get there?

What decisions do you need to make about your products, prices, distribution, promotion and people to help you achieve your objectives? These are the marketing tactics that help you to promote your products or services efficiently and the resources that you will need to do this.

d. How can we ensure arrival?

Now you will need to create a budget for all your tactics to ensure that you have the money to achieve your objectives. You also need to check regularly your progress and benchmark it against your competitors to assess how you are performing.

Measure your progress

Part of your online campaign measurement and management should include using tools like Google Analytics that provide you with reports, metrics and dimensions that are relevant to your business.

Some important metrics as a B2B business include goal conversions for your whitepapers, contacts, quote requests and bounce rates which reveal how engaged your visitors are.

With these metrics, you can create your objectives that set out what you what to achieve and then have Key Performance Indicators that benchmark your progress towards achieving your objectives.

Position your website, products or services

How do you want to position your website and products or services in the market? This is an important question to help you differentiate from competitors and create a unique position for your business. Creating a unique selling proposition is a benefit to the customer too because it makes choosing a supplier much easier and you do this by promoting your strengths and competitive advantage.

B2B target markets

Advertising and targeting businesses on the web is different from targeting consumers. For one, business customers tend to be fewer in number, and they also tend to have a lengthy decision process before they purchase, so targeting them requires understanding how they use the internet to acquire product or services.

Business products and services also tend to be more expensive, and it's unlikely that the internet alone will be sufficient to sell to them. It's more likely that the web can act as an introduction and awareness raising channel that leads to personal selling through your salespeople.

So, make sure you research your market and industry and know how business customers use the internet for acquisition.

B2B online channels?

Knowing who your target customers are, also helps to identify which online channels will be effective at reaching them. For example, many B2B businesses will not use social media channels to acquire products or services, so it may not be a viable option for your business to pour a lot of time and financial resources into social media.

They may be more likely to use search engines to look for business products or services, and this is where you need to be advertising.

Display advertising can prove to be effective in raising awareness for a B2B business especially for a new product or service that the market isn't aware of.

B2B online tools?

If you've determined that pay per click (PPC) advertising is a suitable channel to advertise your business, then you now need to choose the available tools to help you achieve your goals. Two main PPC platforms or tools are Google Adwords and Bing Ads, and both are effective at reaching businesses that are looking for your products and services.

If social media is an online channel that is effective for you, then you can choose tools like LinkedIn and Twitter to reach your prospects.

B2B Online Budgets

An online marketing budget is crucial to achieving your marketing objectives. This helps you to implement your digital strategy and put sufficient money for online promotional tools that are essential to you achieving your goals. Setting a budget is not easy. However, there are a few strategies you can use including matching competitor budgets or a percentage of sales or even costing all tactics you will implement and then adding these up to arrive at your total budget.

Goal Conversions

This will be one of the most important metrics to measure and track as part of your B2B digital marketing strategy. You can track all downloads, contacts, registrations and purchases on your website, which are essential to your business. B2B businesses often do not take orders on their website and usually whitepaper downloads, contacts, phone leads are more significant conversions to track.

B2B Devices Targeting

Desktop is still more important for businesses that are looking for products or services on the web. That's because many searches are done during working hours from business locations and desktop still rules here compared to mobile. Mobile searches for consumers have now surpassed desktop but for B2B, it still lags behind. So, it's important to understand the percentages of devices accessing your websites and then target the most important devices.

Understand customer behaviour online

Which online channels and devices do your target markets use to research and purchase products and services? Knowing this helps to identify your advertising strategy and send targeted messages when they are online and on devices that will help that to convert easily.

Nowadays, most customers are multichannel and multi-device users, and it is very important to keep your brand in front of them when it matters most. They may research on mobile devices but complete their transactions on a desktop because of the device user experience.

Have a mission and goals

Your mission is the reason you are in business, and it guides all your operations. Whether you are a bricks and clicks business or pure-play internet operation, you need a mission that focuses your efforts and ensures you are on track to create a successful business.

You then need goals that set out what your internet marketing plan needs to achieve in the short and long terms. Your aims and objectives should be specific, relevant, measurable, and achievable and you should ensure that you have the time, money and people resources to make it happen.

Segment the market

You will need to identify your customers and know who they are before you can reach them. So, you should segment them according to their demographics (age, sex, income, family life cycle stage), geographics (where they live or based), Psychographics (lifestyle) and Behavioural (how they use your products). These are basic segmentation variables, and they help you to create buyer personas.

To create real buyer personas, you need to look at the various actions that people can complete on your website such as downloading, purchasing, registering, contacting and then see the steps that people take to complete them. This is known as customer scenario analysis, and it helps you identify their needs and wants.

Create a USP

A USP (Unique Selling Proposition) is what sets your business apart from your

competitors and is a benefit that is highly valued by target customers. The reason you need this is because competition on the web is at its highest for a broad range of industries – in both consumer and business sectors. So, you should build on your strengths and minimise your weaknesses and focus on creating a competitive advantage that leads to greater profitability.

Consumers are also more tech savvy and will shop around to find bargains on a wide range of intermediaries like shopping comparison sites like Kelkoo and Shopzilla. This means you should focus on delivering quality that your competitors can't match, and that will convince target markets that your products or services offer greater value.

Also, competitors are only a few clicks away, and your visitors will quickly leave your site if you don't create a unique experience that keeps them engaged.

Boost 'word of mouse'

It's not enough that your business can satisfy customer needs and prevent them from defecting to competitors. You should look to extend the relationship that you have with them and turn them into advocates. The web facilitates this easily and using channels like social media and blogs, your top customers can be ambassadors for your brand and bring new customers to your website through 'word of mouse'.

Also, encouraging your most valuable customers (MVC) to write positive reviews that highlight the quality products and service you provide will help to increase customer acquisition online. You should consider partnering with review sites like Feefo that help you collect reviews from your customers. So if you run Pay Per Click (PPC) campaigns, for example, you will show these reviews with your ads – and this is possible because Feefo, Trustpilot and others are Google partners and provide review data to their PPC platform, Adwords.

Cross-sell and Up-sell

Cross-selling is about promoting related products or services that your customers will likely be interested in. This help to increase the share of customer and increases your profitability with existing customers and reduces defection too. Email marketing is effective at cross-selling to an existing email list or database, and the conversion rates are usually higher than for new visitors because a relationship exists already and trust has been built.

Up-selling is encouraging customers to upgrade to a premium version of your product, and this is evident in all kinds of industries – and an example is a software company like Symantec encouraging you to upgrade from antivirus software to their full total security. Email is valid here too, and customers can be contacted at specific times through automated messages encouraging customers to upgrade or update.

Mass Customisation

Amazon.com is a champion of mass customisation, and the implementation of their strategies can function on any website. Mass customisation is promoting products to specific market segments that they are likely to be interested in based on other customers in that segment. An example is showing a visitor to a category of your website, products that other people have purchased in that category. These will be popular products that

many other visitors have shown interest in and are likely to be of benefit to new visitors and customers.

It differs from online personalisation in that with personalisation; customers receive recommendations based on their past purchases, or products they've bookmarked, and this will often be emailed to existing customers.

Use multi-channels to promote your business

With the diversity in product search and purchasing that customers do online, it's imperative that there is a good representation of your business on multiple channels like search engine marketing, social media, affiliate marketing and more. Each of these channels assists in increasing brand awareness and boosting sales.

Resources

8 Tips On Hiring A Digital Marketing Consultant

1. What sectors have they worked?

Digital marketing is a wide field with many disciplines, and you should ensure that they have experience in your industry or similar sectors. For example, services marketing on the web is different from online retail and the channels used are often different. An online retailer, for example, will use Product Listing Ads to promote their products on Google Shopping whereas Google Maps will be more important for a local service business.

2. Are they a freelancer or agency?

The internet has changed the way we do business, and this growth has led to the emergence of an army of freelancers in all sorts of disciplines. Sites like Elance and People Per Hour have many experienced freelancers that you can hire for one-off or ongoing projects. They are very affordable too, and you can work with a freelancer that's on the other side of the globe effectively.

Agency professionals usually specialise more and you will have a wider range of skills to manage your online marketing campaigns. So you will have copywriters, PPC experts, SEO experts, marketing planners to help your business.

3. Check their qualifications

A consultant with marketing qualifications is a bonus but not essential. Skill and experience are more important, especially in the online realm. However, Google, for example, has a certification programme for its Adwords pay per click platform that is a mark of achievement for an Adwords professional and demonstrates that they have skills and have worked with many clients.

4. Do they have online reviews?

Check their online reviews to see what feedback they've received from past clients. Many sites collect reviews and on freelancer sites, you can see reviews for past projects.

5. What do they charge?

Check their prices beforehand and ensure that it covers all the work that you need doing. The proposal they send should list all the activities and the cost for each with timescales too.

6. Are they published?

Have they written any articles or books that you can check out, to see what their expertise is before you hire them. It's not essential that they are published, however, published marketers with positive reviews have demonstrated a high level of knowledge in their discipline.

7. Check their experience

Make a shortlist of digital marketing consultants that have the experience you need and verify that they have worked with clients in your industry.

8. Who have they worked with?

Check who they have worked with and ask for references.

Digital Marketing Objectives Examples

To achieve your business mission and goals on the web, you need specific digital marketing objectives that guide your <u>online promotional</u> activities. Each campaign you create, and all ads that you run should be in line with your <u>marketing objectives</u> and be relevant to your target market.

Your digital marketing objectives should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time Related); and should be benchmarked against your competitors to ensure that you are more efficient.

Here are five important objectives to include in your <u>marketing</u> strategy:

1. Increase Sales

Increasing sales or leads is a top-level digital marketing objective for many businesses because it improves revenues and is easy to measure. Using key performance indicators (KPI), you can then benchmark your progress towards achieving your objective, and you can track this in your spreadsheets.

An example of a SMART objective would be:

"Increase sales by 10% from existing customers by Dec 2015."

2. Improve conversion rate

This is another digital marketing purpose that can be tracked in Google Analytics. By setting up goal tracking in Analytics, you will have reports on conversions for your traffic sources, campaigns, keywords, landing pages, locations and so on.

With this data, you can then track a conversion rate objective like:

"Improve organic traffic conversion rate by 25% by Nov 2015."

3. Percentage of return visitors

The New vs. Returning visitors is a metric that is available in Analytics, and it is easy to track. Knowing how many visitors return is an important objective because it helps you see how productive your business is at visitor and customer loyalty.

This helps you to create a concrete and measurable goal that is relevant to your particular industry, and an example is:

"15% of visitors should be returners by the end of the year."

4. Organic traffic volumes

Organic traffic is natural traffic from the search engine result pages. It is considered as free traffic, and it is distinct from paid traffic. Lots of businesses have the objective to increase organic visitor traffic by achieving high search engine rankings through implementing search engine optimisation.

To achieve this requires making changes to your website that are effective at improving

rankings and one of the important ones is including keywords in the content. Another important tactic is to build quality links that point to your website.

A digital marketing objective example for organic traffic could be:

"Receive 20,000 visitors per month from Google and Bing natural results by year end."

5. Reduce bounce rate

Bounce rate in analytics is defined as people who enter your site and leave (bounce) rather than continue viewing other pages. This is an important measure of the quality of your website because almost all businesses want their visitors to complete an action like purchase, contact or download on their websites.

The lower the bounce rate, the better, and many marketers say that a bounce rate below 50% is good. However, that differs from business to business.

Here is a bounce rate digital marketing objective example:

"Reduce bounce rate below 40% for all traffic sources by Dec 2015."

Mobile Marketing Strategy Tactics

1. Plan your mobile strategy

Create a mobile marketing strategy to plan how you will target mobile users with your product and service offers. The strategy should detail how your target audiences are using mobile to search, browse and purchase products. For a retailer, for example, that means understanding the relationship between mobile search and purchases and how that relates to desktops and if they use their Smartphones for showrooming (examining a product in a shop before buying it online).

2. Research your market

Find out who your target audience is and target the segments that are most relevant to your business. Remember many people use their mobile to search but they use other devices to make their purchase such as desktop, laptop and visiting the store in person. Knowing this as it relates to your sector will help you pick the best strategy including keywords and ads to target on mobile.

3. Define your mobile objectives

Having identified your markets and the mobile strategy you want to implement, now you should create [marketing objectives](#) that are relevant and specific to your business. Use Google Analytics to research your key metrics like session and visitor counts, bounce rates, average time on page, mobile devices used and then create objectives for these.

The following tips are mobile tactics that help you to achieve your objectives and meet the needs of your customers:

1. Mobile responsive website

Making your site more mobile responsive is important than ever, due to the recent announcement by Google that sites that are responsive will benefit from higher rankings on mobile devices.

You can test how mobile responsive your website is by using the free tool here https://www.google.co.uk/webmasters/tools/mobile-friendly/

If you are on WordPress, there are thousands of responsive themes that you can download and use for your site. Overall, a mobile-responsive site is a good user experience for your website visitors, and it leads to greater visitor satisfaction.

2. Create mobile ads

If you run Google Adwords campaigns, you should create mobile ads if you have specific offers for mobile users. Many local businesses like restaurants use this effectively to show timely offers and with a telephone number available, visitors can call directly from their mobiles.

3. Create a mobile site

The debate over creating a responsive mobile site versus having a mobile website has been raging for a while. However, a responsive site has suddenly become more important as explained above. However, a mobile website is still a viable option because it allows you to structure quickly how your site looks on mobile devices.

4. Create a mobile app

For online retailers, shoppers are increasingly downloading apps to make their searches and purchase of clothing, footwear, accessories and others a lot easier. Also, they are doing this to get coupons that are easily available on apps and encourage purchase. Retailers without apps are losing customers and the opportunity to create loyalty, to their competitors that have apps.

5. Increase mobile bids

If you advertise on Google, you can adjust your mobile bids and increase them to gain more prominence on these devices. You can also choose which networks see your ads and which devices too, by adjusting this in your campaign settings and then increase bids for your choices.

6. Localise your mobile marketing strategy

Mobile is also prominent for local searches and people on the go, finding services is easier and quicker on mobile devices. So you should create a Google My Business account and create listings for your business to appear on Google Maps and for other searches.

7. Track and report

An effective way to track and report on mobile traffic is through Google Analytics and creating a profile for mobile traffic. This simplifies your reporting and makes it all look less cluttered. You can even filter this further for specific countries that you are only interested in marketing to.

Ecommerce Marketing Strategy Solutions

If you have plans to boost your online sales and increase customer loyalty, then an e-commerce marketing strategy is what you need. It will help you target your products to the specific needs of your clients and bring you closer to achieving the mission and goals of your business.

Here are nine solutions for your e-commerce marketing strategy that you can implement today and help realise your goals:

1. Target your audience

First, you should identify the market you want to target and understand how they can benefit from your products. It's important to remember that it's not the features of your products that people are interested in, but rather what your products can do to meet their needs and wants. So, you should segment the market based on the benefits that each segment would be most interested in and then choose the groups that you will target through advertising and promotions.

2. Launch Product Listing Ad (PLA) Campaign

Google Shopping ads have been around for many years now and for online retailers that have a datafeed, promoting their products with this E-commerce marketing strategy is very effective. First you should create a datafeed in CSV format that lists all the products you want to promote on Google and then create a Google Merchant Centre account where you will upload it. Then you link your Merchant Centre account with your Google Adwords account and create a PLA campaign to promote your products on shopping ads.

3. Invest in Mobile

It's now more important than ever to have a responsive mobile site for the following reasons:

- Google ranks sites that are mobile-responsive higher on mobile devices

- Creates a great user experience for visitors and builds trust

- Makes completing transactions on your website easier

- Adaption of site to the device accessing it

- Leads to customer loyalty.

Also, creating a mobile app is an excellent e-commerce marketing strategy for customer retention, building loyalty and increasing sales.

4. Personalise your website

Personalising your site to visitors and clients is a strategy that Amazon does extremely well. It leads to greater customer and visitor loyalty and ultimately leads to higher sales and profitability. Some personalisation tactics include cross-selling similar products that your visitor has been viewing; recommending products that your existing customers may be interested in; tailoring the web page for the device and show similar searches in the category they are viewing.

5. Easy navigation

Visitors should easily find what they are looking for on your website and within a few clicks. For an e-commerce site, it's possible that your website has a few more levels of navigation as compared to an information site. However, you should keep this to a

minimum to make it easy for your visitors and the search engines to crawl your website. Another feature to add is breadcrumbs, so your visitors know where they are on your website. Also, don't ask your visitors to register before placing an order; rather put this at the end of the checkout process to minimise dropout.

6. Track and measure

Google Analytics provides you with a wide range of tools and features to track and measure your website traffic. You can segment visitors on many variables such as demographics, location, website engagement, devices used and many others. You also have many metrics to measure the success of your online campaigns such as sales, sessions, average time on site, pageviews, bounce rates and visitors. And you can use these to build the objectives that are relevant to your business. Advanced reports like multichannels funnels and attribution modelling are available to help you assess the impact of all your channels and how they contribute to sales – Paid search, Organic, Direct, Social Network, Referrals, etc.

7. Remarketing

Remarketing with Google or Facebook is a way to bring people back to your website and increase sales and revenue. So, you can target people, for example, who've visited but have not placed an order and send them targeted messages as they browse other websites that are part of the Google Display Network. As an e-commerce business, you can also use dynamic remarketing to promote products that your visitors have shown interest in on your website.

8. Display Ads

Although banner ads have been losing their popularity over the years, and this is seen through low click-through rates (CTR), they are still an effective way to increase brand awareness and increase sales. When targeted well, they have more impact than text ads because of the images and pictures you can add, especially with rich media ads, and they have a wider reach too.

9. Facebook Ads

Facebook is an effective channel for an e-commerce marketing strategy because it encompasses all aspects of your strategy including customer acquisition, raising brand awareness, sending offers and discounts and launching new products. And you can achieve all of this with Facebook ads and drive visitors to your website and Facebook page.

7 Reasons Why You Need A Digital Marketing Strategy

Whether you are a brick and mortar business with a minimal online presence or are a pure-play internet business targeting online customers, you need an e-marketing strategy to plan your campaigns and achieve online success.

An e-marketing strategy has many benefits and businesses that fail to plan suffer from:

- Poor online targeting

- Resource wastage because of lack of focus

- Low ROI (Return On Investment)

So, planning is imperative and here are seven reasons why you need an e-marketing strategy:

1. Meet customer needs

People are bombarded with ads, banners, messages and emails on the Internet. In fact, the average person sees over 3000 adverts per day including offline messages and it's difficult for any one business to attract and engage customers in the midst of all this noise.

So, it's important to ensure that you identify customers who will benefit from what you have to offer and then create a compelling offer that cuts through the noise. Many tools and channels help you do this, including PPC programs like Google Adwords that are effective at reaching people who are searching for your products or services.

2. Boost ROI

These online resources are highly measurable too compared to traditional forms of advertising such as TV and print and it's easy to track your spend and measure your returns.

With the help of tools like Google Analytics, you can track how many people see your ads (impressions), how many visit your site from your ads (clicks), how many of these purchase (conversions), how many return (% of return visitors) and a host of other metrics.

So, all this data helps you easily calculate your return on investment and ensures that you are focusing your efforts on channels that are most profitable for your business.

3. Increase loyalty

Developing an e-marketing strategy is beneficial in creating customer loyalty because it helps you identify the benefits that they are seeking on your website and all contact points, and then you adjust your offers accordingly.

Email marketing is one of the best channels for visitor and customer retention, and it should be an active part of your strategy whether you are an e-commerce store or B2B business.

With tools like Analytics, you can measure visitor loyalty by using such reports as New vs. Returning Visitors, and you can keep track of the conversion rates of new visitors and returning visitors to see how effective your strategy is.

4. Achieve business goals

Your goals are success measures, and your e-marketing strategy helps you create short term objectives that lead to success in your mission and goals. From the research that you carry out about your target markets and how they use the web to purchase or acquire services, you can create concrete and measurable objectives that are relevant to your business.

5. Check competitors

Competitors will also be launching and managing their e-marketing strategies, and you

will be targeting the same customers. Companies that win usually have a well-documented strategy of how they will meet customer needs and wants and what their objectives are as they relate to the market.

6. Monitor progress

It helps you to monitor how your advertising and promotional activities are performing and how far you are from achieving your marketing objectives. You can also adjust any aspects of your strategy as the market changes and as new technologies enter the market.

7. Track results

Using tools that you have identified in your planning as being important to tracking the results of your online campaigns, you can assess how effective you have been with your e-marketing strategy.

Top 7 Digital Marketing Channels

There are 7 top digital marketing channels that your business should be represented in, no matter your sector or industry. The way people research, browse and purchase products and services has changed, and most people are now multichannel and multi-device internet users.

So, if there are no adequate representation of your prospects, you will lose out to competitors.

To see how well you are performing on these channels, view your Analytics Reports under Conversions > Multi-Channels Funnels > Top Conversion Paths. This will reveal how you are performing on each channel for e-commerce sales and goal conversions, and you can then work towards optimising your digital marketing strategy.

Here are the top 7 digital marketing channels:

1. Paid Search

Paid search is a leading digital marketing channel for the following reasons:

- Quick and easy to implement

- Highly measurable and easy to track

- Seamless integration with analytics (Adwords and Google Analytics)

- Easy to stop and abandon

- High volumes of traffic especially from search engines

- Available on social media platforms with high traffic volumes

- Sends qualified visitors that are ready to purchase

Google Adwords is the leading paid search platform followed by Bing Ads, Facebook Ads and others. Its primary pricing model is CPC (cost per click) which is a charge for every click through to your website and the other is CPM (cost per thousand impressions) which

has a charge rate for every 1000 impressions for your ads.

Paid search plays a big part in multi-channel purchasing and often it is important at both the awareness phase and purchase of the buying process. So it's important to ensure that budget is sufficient for paid campaigns and that they are always live, because when people are ready to purchase and if they don't find your website, they will purchase from competitors.

2. Organic Search

Organic search is also known as natural search, and you will see these results when you search on Google and other search engines in the main area of the page. One of the fascinating things about organic search is that this traffic is free, and you don't pay per click like Paid Search above.

So, the goal is to get your site to the top of the search engines for your chosen keywords, and the technique to do this is SEO (Search Engine Optimisation).

Organic search is important throughout all phases of the customer decision-making process (Perception of need, Information search, Evaluation of products, Purchase and Post-purchase evaluation). So you should have keywords targeted at each stage of the buying process.

3. Direct

As the top channels report in Google Analytics shows, direct traffic plays an important part closer to the purchase stage. When prospects have researched using organic, paid search and social networks, and they have finally decided to purchase from you, they will come directly to your site. So this is not really a digital marketing channel, but it is an important part of the steps that people take to converting.

4. Referrals

Referrals include a wide range of sites and portals across the web and a high presence of many sites will often show referrals as being crucial to the paths that people take to completing a goal or purchase on your website.

5. Social Networks

Social networks don't often play a big part in digital marketing channels last-click attribution models. That's because it is more efficient at creating awareness and interest in a brand and products and it contributes to website visitors – however, at a minimal volume compared to organic and paid traffic.

However, it is an effective channel for creating loyalty and customer retention. It is also great for creating a buzz and sending out viral content related to your business.

6. Email

Email is the most effective digital marketing channel at building visitor and customer loyalty. Visitors who've signed up to your newsletter or blog have shown a high level of trust and belief that you can supply what they want or need. Although not prominent in many top channel reports for many businesses, it is still highly effective at boosting sales and conversions.

7. Display

Display is perhaps the best digital marketing channel for generating awareness for your products and brands to an audience that is not familiar with your business. It has high impact, and although it has low click-through rate compared to search campaigns, it has a far wider reach.

8 Digital Marketing Strategy Mistakes to Avoid

Your online web marketing strategy is what helps your business to increase sales, raise brand awareness, connect with customers and reach your goals while meeting your customers' needs. However, there are many pitfalls to avoid and mistakes that could render your strategy ineffective at helping you achieve your business goals.

So, here are 8 online web marketing strategy mistakes to avoid:

1. Not identifying target market segments

This is one of the biggest mistakes made by many businesses in their web marketing strategies. Most businesses do not have the resources to target all market segments, so they choose segments that are relevant to what they sell and to people who have the means and intention to purchase from the business. This is known as target marketing, and it is important especially on the web where precise targeting is often more achievable than offline marketing.

2. No marketing objectives

Marketing objectives are essential in guiding the marketing strategy and having a target that is relevant, realistic and measurable for the business. Objectives are short-term goals usually between 6 – 12 months and they inform your internet marketing strategy regarding how you will advertise online, what features/benefits to promote, how to position your products or services and what budget to set.

3. Not monitoring competitor strategies

Monitoring competitors online helps you identify their strengths and weaknesses and with that you can decide how to position your business in the market. Whether they are direct or indirect competitors, it's important to understand who they are, what product or service benefits they have and how they are performing on key metrics like unique visitors, bounce rates, pageviews etc.

4. Using too few online channels

Using a few channels to promote your business online is quite common with many businesses, which will focus only on search engine optimisation, social media or blogging to reach customers. This leads to low conversion rates and with customers using multiple channels to research and purchase products, you will miss the opportunity to increase sales and raise brand awareness with target customers.

5. Not having a digital marketing strategy

A digital marketing strategy is what helps you target your markets and meet their need and wants with your offers. Your customers should be at the heart of all online operations, and your strategy should highlight how you will respond to their needs.

6. Insufficient budget

Having a low budget or one that does not allow you to implement all tactics that are part of your online marketing strategy means that you are unlikely to achieve your objectives. So, you should prioritise tactics that will help you achieve your goals that are germane to your business and ensure that you have sufficient financial resources to implement them.

7. No benchmarks

You should create key performance indicators for each of your objectives that help to benchmark your progress and compare against competitors too. Doing this helps to ensure that you are always on track and that your objectives are realistic and achievable.

8. Incorrect tracking

You should decide which metrics are crucial to your business, and will help you achieve your objectives. Sales and leads are obvious ones, and you track these with e-commerce and goal tracking in Analytics, but you need to go deeper into your reporting to track acquisition, conversion and retention metrics in analytics that will help your business to achieve good profitability and ROI on the web.

4 Types Of Digital Marketing Strategies

Deciding on an [online marketing](#) strategy for your business is one of the most difficult tasks you will undertake on the web. There are many factors to consider including what stage of the lifecycle your products are at – launch, growth, maturity or decline – and how you will target customers effectively.

You also need to make decisions on what your online marketing objectives are and then choose the promotional tactics and product, price and place tactics that will help you achieve them.

To help you decide on which strategy to follow, you should take a closer look at your products, target markets, competitors, budgets and stakeholders and then review the following online marketing strategy solutions:

Market Penetration

A market penetration strategy involves increasing share of the current market by selling more of the existing product to the existing customer base. One online channel to implement this strategy is email marketing through your customer database. So, email can be used to encourage customers to buy more of your products or services – and recommend family and friends too.

Social media is another channel to use for a market penetration strategy because many followers and fans will be existing customers and you can use offers and discounts to encourage more repeat purchases.

Remarketing is another tactic to use, and here you can retarget existing clients and remind them of your offers and encourage them to return to your website. Two platforms to launch a remarketing campaign are the Google Display Network (GDN) and Facebook. With Facebook, you can upload your email list or database of customers and target them with tailored banners and ads as they use the Facebook site.

Overall, a database of customers is essential to this online marketing strategy and it is one of the profitable ones because you are targeting individuals and businesses with which you have an existing relationship.

Market Development

If you have achieved high brand awareness with your target segments and your products are at the mature stage of the product lifecycle and there is little or no growth prospects; then a market development strategy should be considered.

This online marketing strategy involves looking for new market segments for existing products, and some effective ways include selling to an international market, or targeting new markets with an updated version of your product.

Pay Per Click (PPC) advertising is an online channel that allows you to target easily international markets by creating new campaigns on Google Adwords or Bing Ads for example. So, with little or no modification of products, you can target prospects in other markets with similar needs to domestic markets.

Product Development

It's easier to target existing customers with new products because you already have a relationship with them, and they are aware of the level of service and have positive product perceptions.

One of the most effective online channels for targeting existing customers with new products is email marketing. As mentioned earlier, your customer database includes people and businesses that have purchased once or more times in the past and will be receptive to any product offers that you push to them.

This is especially true if you have launched a new version of a product and customers have to upgrade – for example, with an antivirus software that is upgraded yearly and operating system software that is released every few years. These customers are unlikely to defect to rivals when it is time to upgrade, and you can incentivise them with discounts and vouchers.

Diversification

Diversification is the riskiest marketing strategy because it involves creating new products and targeting new markets. A lot of research is required here into the buying habits of customers and there are online channels and tools that can help you do this.

Advertising is effective at raising awareness quickly and some online channels to use when you have launched a new product and want to target new customers are online press releases, banner advertising and pay per click advertising. Online press releases can prove to be very profitable because there is no charge to distribute them to news sites, except maybe hiring a PR expert to craft your messages.

Social media is also effective at raising brand awareness.   However, targeting can at times be difficult, and you are likely to market to people who are outside your geographic location and, therefore, unable to benefit from your offers.

However, with pay per click advertising and banner advertising too, you can target people

who are searching for products like yours to fulfill their needs.

Video Marketing Tips

Identify your target market

For your videos to be effective, you should identify the market segments that you want to reach and then try to understand what their needs and wants are. This is one of the first things to do when launching a video marketing strategy and it will help you to be more successful. Knowing your target markets also helps you to create specific and relevant objectives that you want to achieve for your business.

Keep video under 10 minutes

Short videos are popular on Youtube and they often lead to more conversions especially when they cover all the key points and have a call to action. Viewers are likely to click and watch a short video and they are also likely to watch them to the end unlike videos that stretch for 30 minutes or more. However, your videos should be as long as they ought to be, to make sure you cover all key points – but keep them shorter wherever possible.

Run a video ad campaign

After creating and posting your videos to YouTube, you should promote them in Adwords to get some views and traffic to your website. This is especially helpful when the video and your YouTube channel are still new and you have no followers and exposures. You can create a video campaign in Adwords and link your Adwords and YouTube accounts and then start promoting your videos.

Include the keywords in the title

Visitors on YouTube search using keywords to find videos and if you include the keywords in the title and description, your video is more likely to come up in the results. As your channel grows and as it gains popularity, your rankings will increase and your videos will appear at the top of the results. Your videos will also start to appear in Google search results and this will boost your traffic.

Post it on your website

After posting it to YouTube, Vimeo and other video sites, you should post it to your website to get more views. Many people don't like to read and they will prefer to watch a video or a film instead, so you should be targeting these prospects. This is especially true on the internet where people are almost always in a hurry and will not hang around to read your content. Video also leads to greater engagement, and people are more willing to leave comments to express their views and opinions.

Create an outline in the description

Your description is where you should describe what your viewers will learn about in your video. It will help them to stay longer and know what to expect as they watch it. You should include a synopsis of the video in the description and a call to action, and this will help them remember your video and do what you require them to do after watching it.

Track key metrics

Video has some unique metrics that you won't find with other traffic sources and these include Views, View rate, and Average CPV. One of the easiest to understand is "video played to" – which shows how long your video played for. So, you can see what percentage of your video was played to 25%, 50%, 75% and 100%. This helps to see how effective your video is and how engaged people are with it.

Create an event in analytics

If you upload your video on your website, you should create an event in Google Analytics to track how many views and interactions you get. Creating an event is easy and requires a few changes to the analytics tracking code and then re-uploading it to your website.

Give away a free offer

Including a free offer with your videos will increase traffic to your website and lead to greater visitor retention. Include a link in the description to your site and also include it in the video itself, so that your visitors can click-through to your website to receive it and then create an opt-in form that they can sign up to as they claim the offer.

About the author

Mike Ncube is an award winning digital marketing consultant and marketing author. He has over 10 years experience in implementing and managing digital marketing strategies for clients in a wide range of sectors including retail, travel, professional services and commerce. Mike is a certified Google Adwords experts and has managed client accounts for over 10 years

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