

Digital Marketing in 2021: A 360° Approach



What Is and What Isn't Digital Marketing; A Dive Below the Surface

Ask a few marketers about their digital marketing, and you will hear an explanation of their ad spend across digital platforms.

While it's not entirely wrong to define "digital marketing" in terms of ad buys, it's also not a complete picture.

Consider taking a more holistic view. Effective digital marketing requires a strategic 360° approach that identifies and speaks to audiences wherever they are — and wherever they move — in the virtual landscape.

Starting from an informed strategic foundation, tactical pieces of a digital marketing campaign might indeed tap into channels that include display and programmatic advertising, search marketing, social advertising, email marketing and analytics. Guard yourself against mistaking these tactics for a complete digital marketing strategy by considering your strengths and weaknesses across your current digital foundation. A well-designed strategy ensures you'll have a consistent, cohesive marketing presence across every platform, channel and tactic you use.



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Adapting to Trends

Although digital marketing dates back to the 1980s, the industry has experienced radical transformations in recent years. The flood of innovative technologies has opened countless new doors — not just for ads, but for email, search engine optimization (SEO), paid search and more.

To effectively evolve a digital strategy over time, marketers must continually monitor trends, such as:



DWINDLING ORGANIC SOCIAL MEDIA AUDIENCES. We can no longer count on social media to provide the same deep reach that was available just a few years ago. That means brands must pay to play — but it also opens the door to the benefits of micro-targeted messages.



CONTINUED FRACTURING OF THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT. People consume media from multiple devices at the same time, and there's little doubt that the number of digital channels will continue to grow. Although this may make it more difficult to find exactly where your audience will be most receptive to your message, there are numerous opportunities to fine tune your strategy and adapt messages in appearance and functionality by leveraging responsive and automated approaches.



CONSTANT MESSAGE BOMBARDMENT. As the number of digital outlets rises, so does the number of messages audiences receive. Information overload. Noise. Limited attention span. No matter what you call it, an effective marketing strategy must cut through the clutter and not be seen as adding to it.



AUDIENCE DISTRUST OF MEDIA MESSAGES. To compound the challenges of a fractured, noisy environment, distrust of media and other major institutions is at an all-time high. According to the [Reuters Institute Digital News Report](#), for example, people across nine countries (including the U.S.) commonly perceive bias, spin and agendas within news media. Digital marketing must overcome this prevailing sense of doubt.

What You Really Need to Know

When you boil it all down, the key to developing a strong, steady and consistent digital marketing strategy is the ability to accurately answer three fundamental questions:

1. Where is your audience within the digital landscape?

2. When is your audience most receptive to your message?

3. What message will deliver the highest chance for conversion?

To find those answers — and then leverage them in holistic marketing strategies — it is critical that your approach continually adapts as media and technology evolve. The components of this ever-changing process should include:



AUDITING



STRATEGY



PLANNING & EXECUTION



MONITORING & MEASUREMENT



APPLYING INSIGHTS

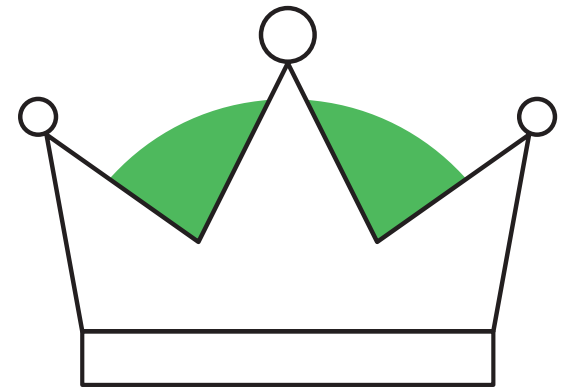
Best Practices to Keep Your Audience Hooked

It will forever be true that effective digital marketing delivers the right message to the right audience at the right time.

And if that wasn't hard enough, add the right channels and the right platforms to the top of that list as well.

The next few pages assess the digital marketing landscape in the following focus areas.

- It's important to recognize that content is still king. Audiences are skeptical, so any marketing effort will fall flat without content that delivers value. That means it must offer not only something your audience wants, but it must do so with a tone that's respectful and relatable. (In other words, content must talk to your audience — not at them.)
- Consider the strength of your SEO. Coupled with compelling content, strong on-page SEO and off-site authority building helps audiences navigate directly to meaningful content at shallow and deep levels of your site. These opportunities open up numerous points of entry into the user journey and are in stark contrast to the traditional marketing funnel.
- Use paid media tactics, such as paid social, display, search engine marketing, and pay-per-click when you need quick, measurable and controllable campaigns. These options bring quicker results compared to their organic, earned counterparts.
- Leverage digital analytics to determine what metrics, such as traffic, leads, and sales, can be tracked through marketing efforts.
- Continue the conversation with your prospective customers using email marketing.



Focus on Your Audience First

Let's face it: Nobody listens to someone who has nothing interesting to say. Make sure you have compelling stories to tell.



Content is the bedrock on which every effective digital marketing effort is built.

In a fractured, oversaturated environment where audiences are bombarded with information, the best way to capture their attention is by delivering content that is useful, relevant and interesting. It should engage them with an understanding, approachable tone, not hype or arrogance.

So, start by assessing your existing owned content. What can you leverage from your website and related content such as white papers, blogs, e-newsletters, and other forms of brand journalism or content marketing? Do you have other owned, earned or paid content you can repurpose or update with relevant data? Reusing content is not only a way to make the most out of work you've already done and extend that investment, but it's also necessary to combat the environmental noise and short attention spans. The best content is not only useful, but flexible enough to be used in numerous ways across multiple channels — creating, in essence, a virtual content “surround sound.”

Once compelling stories with a consistent message have been identified, you can synchronize their use across all owned, paid, earned and shared digital channels.



Strengthen Owned (And Paid) Content with SEO

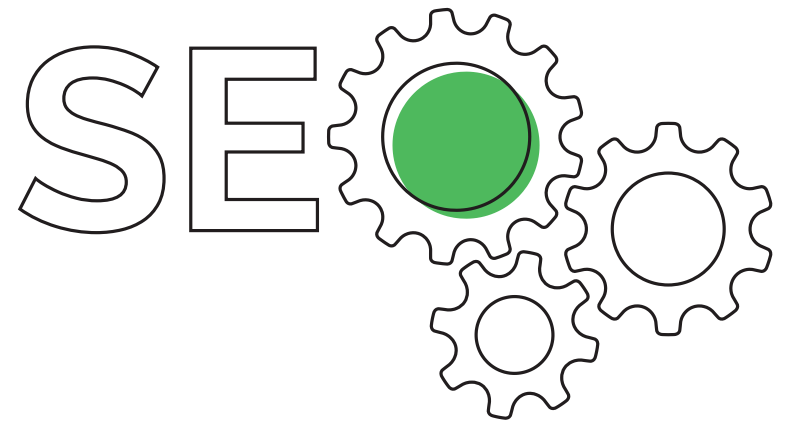
The fast-changing nature of both competitive landscapes and digital environments makes constant vigilance necessary. Search engines, for example, continually tweak and fine-tune their algorithms. Marketers must stay abreast of these changes to design optimal campaign strategies.

But SEO is more than keywords. The beating heart of SEO is the content on the page. That's because good SEO seeks to align the strength of your content with the interests and needs of your audience. Keywords play an integral role in this alignment, making it essential to research and use the right keywords within content.

When done properly, active SEO can help maximize a company's search engine results page (SERP) ranking. Building research around a content strategy, shoring up your on-page technical setup and locating high-quality, authoritative backlinks can feel daunting when working backwards through your existing content. However, it is critical. Bringing your SEO efforts up-to-date will set the foundation for ongoing maintenance.

Once a foundation is built, tracking visibility and monitoring your web analytics becomes a source of checks and balances for your system. Moreover, integrating SEO into your messaging from the beginning, while it's being developed, helps to make the management of new content feel much easier.

**...ongoing
effort requiring
evaluation and
planning...**



DIGITAL FOCUS AREA #2: SEO (CONTINUED)

To build an effective SEO content strategy, start with a three-point SEO evaluation focused on analyzing:

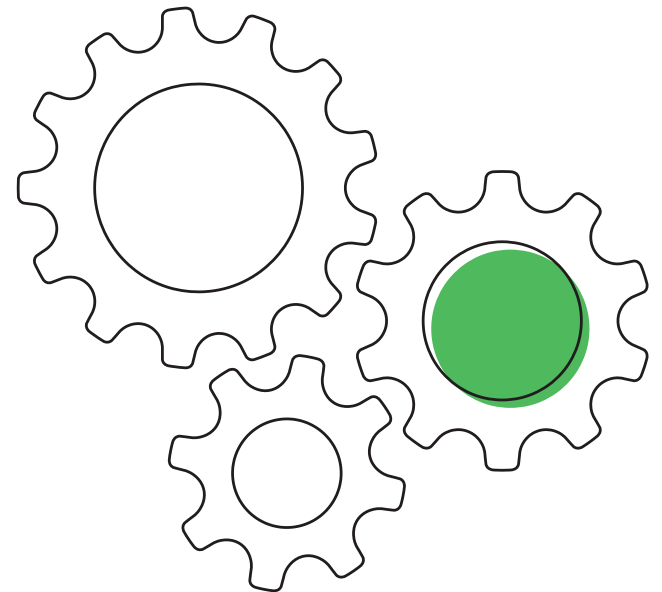
1. Historical Performance

2. Industry Research

3. Competitive Landscape

This evaluation establishes a rolling standard for keyword research across all types of content. In addition, our findings can be organized into a Keyword Content Map. This helps to link appropriate keywords to relevant content and — when used to its full potential — identifies gaps in content based on business objectives and competitive research.

With this data-driven intelligence in hand, it's easier to create unique, keyword-rich, long-form content that doubles down on the effectiveness of your key messages.



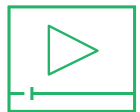
Initiate Paid Media Tactics

Paid media has become a necessity for brands to amplify content to the right audiences, at the right time, with the right message. Paid media can have a major - and positive - impact on most businesses and brands.

A prime example is pay-per-click (PPC) campaigns: PPC can help you achieve a vast number of business and marketing goals. These goals range from high-level brand exposure and thought leadership to a hot lead submission.

Consider starting with measurable paid tactics such as social media marketing and PPC. The beauty of these is that they rely on the strength of your owned content, which gives you total control over the messages you deliver.

Over the next couple of pages, let's look at how leveraging these paid media tactics can lead to success.



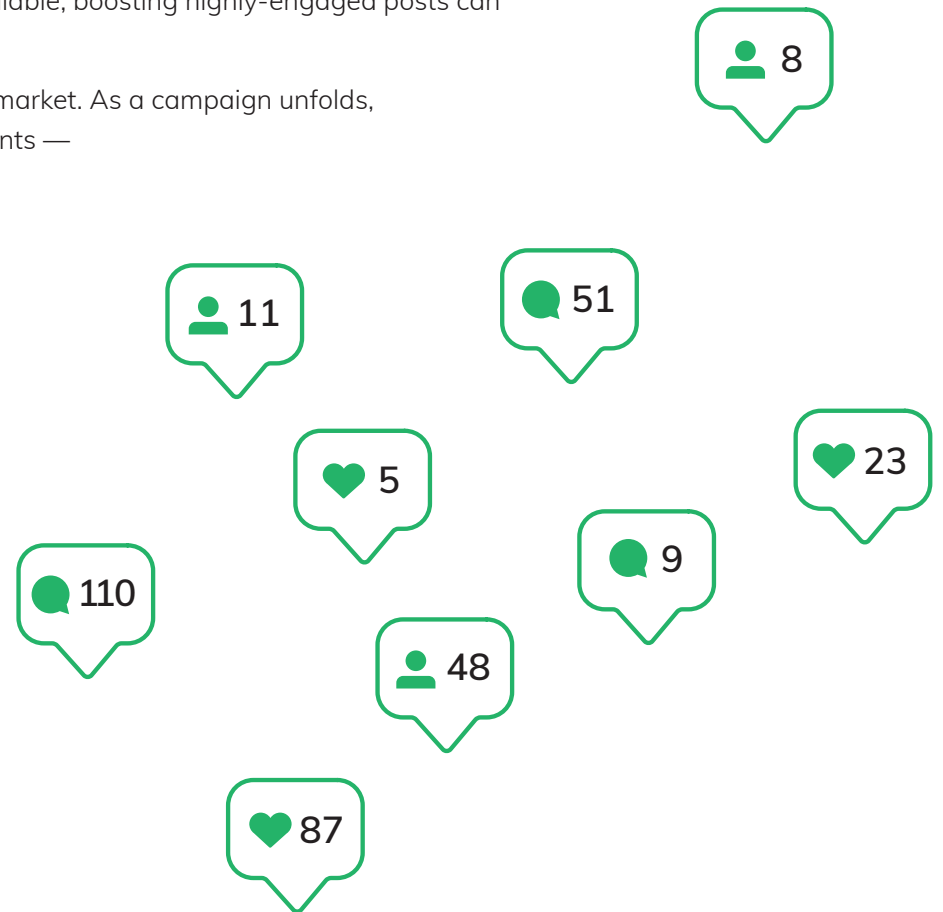
INCREASE YOUR REACH WITH PAID SOCIAL MEDIA

Organic social media doesn't have the same impact it did a few years ago. Recent moves toward paid advertising models by most channels, paired with consumer concerns about potential data exposure, has reduced its reach.

Yet paid social media is an exceptionally cost-effective way to build brand awareness and influence a broader audience with your owned content. Consider using paid social for specific call-to-action campaigns, such as an email marketing series delivering high-quality, meaningful content. When content isn't available, boosting highly-engaged posts can drive up exposure and awareness.

No other channel offers the same ability to manage and micro-target the market. As a campaign unfolds, paid social lets you control the messaging, frequency, reach, and participants — helping drive measurably stronger returns.

But there **IS** a caveat: To be effective, social media campaigns must be strategically integrated into the rest of your marketing plan. Too often organizations treat social as a one-off, almost as an afterthought. Paid social media can certainly pay off in conversions, but it must be treated with the same kind of strategic approach as other digital marketing tactics.



DIGITAL FOCUS AREA #3: PAID MEDIA (CONTINUED)

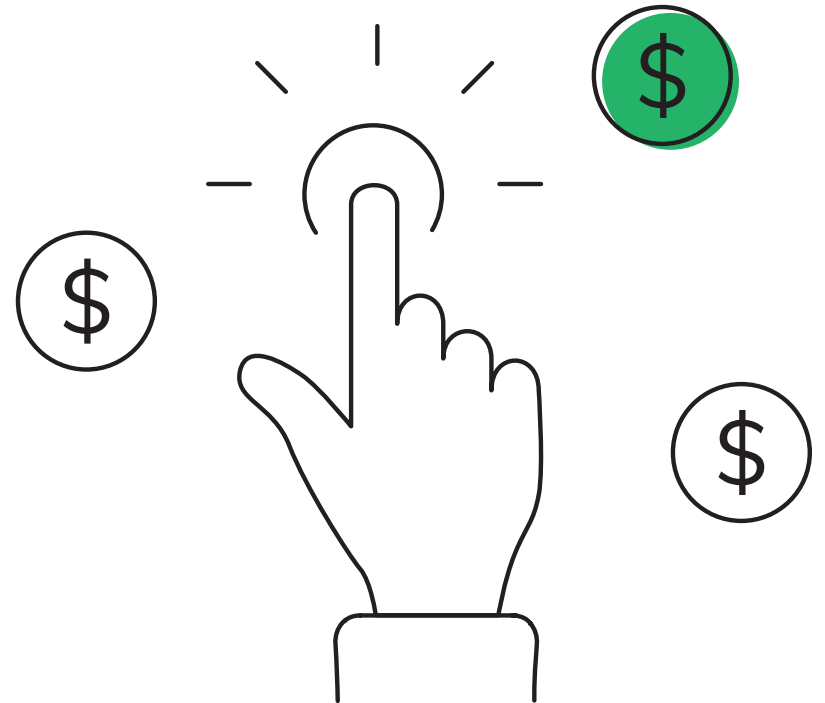
IMPROVE YOUR CONVERSION RATE WITH SEARCH ENGINE MARKETING (PAY-PER-CLICK)

The goal of pay-per-click (PPC) campaigns is to encourage and maximize click-through rates to generate conversions. These campaigns produce lots of data quickly, so it doesn't take long to know whether or not they're performing as desired.

With PPC you can define what you want to advertise, how long you want the ad to run, and how much you want to spend. The low barrier to entry combined with a high degree of flexibility makes PPC a good tactic to use when you want to test an idea, measure results and adjust as-needed.

Maximum effectiveness comes from striking the proper balance between effective budget pacing, managing keywords, writing compelling copy, managing the keywords, and setting the cadence to maximize budget.

Like SEO, email marketing, and paid social, the trackability of PPC makes it an important part of a comprehensive digital marketing strategy.



DIGITAL FOCUS AREA #4: EMAIL MARKETING

BUILD VALUABLE RELATIONSHIPS WITH EMAIL MARKETING

Used correctly, email is one of the most engaging channels of digital communications because it is personal and direct. Whether you're sending out a new piece of content, promoting a new service or staying in touch with customers, email should be a key form of communications.

Consider these statistics from the Adobe "Email Use 2017 – US Report" (2018):

- 61% of respondents would like to be contacted by brands through email
- 40% would prefer more informational, less promotional marketing emails; another 27% want content better personalized to their interests
- 81% check emails on their smartphones

The most effective email campaigns start with two factors:

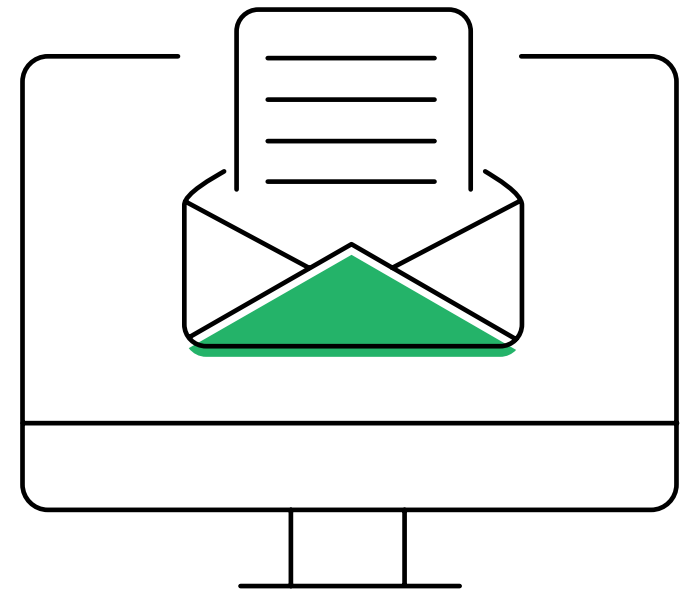
- 1. THE QUALITY OF THE LIST.** Buying or renting a list may seem easy and effective, but it's dangerous. In fact, these lists could put you at risk for suspension and (more importantly) damage your domain and brand. Instead, the best lists are those you build from within your owned channels. Strategically encouraging and earning email signups through your website, social media, and product or event registrations. Sourcing and qualifying your contacts this way ensures you'll be addressing a truly interested audience — and one that's already predisposed to your message. This makes it easier to guide them down the path from prospect, to qualified lead to sales conversion.
- 2. THE VALUE OF THE CONTENT.** Consumers have come to expect that marketers will guide them through their personal content journey, making sure that they get all their questions answered on the road to making a purchase. Now, more than ever, it's critical to understand buyers' core demographics, their behaviors, and their wants and needs. Personalized and informational content can fulfill those needs. When nurturing leads, the content must speak to the unique decision motivators of your target audience and offer practical, realistic solutions. If it doesn't, you risk alienating them.

DIGITAL FOCUS AREA #4: EMAIL MARKETING (CONTINUED)

Since 81% of consumers are opening email on mobile devices, making sure your email templates are mobile-responsive is critical and can lead to high click-through rates. A common misperception is that HTML-designed templates are too “polished” or “salesy,” but that’s not necessarily true. A simple HTML design can give an email the more personal feel typically associated with plain-text formats. If you’re not sure which style your audience will prefer, it is possible to determine preference for HTML vs. plain-text through A/B testing

Measuring the success of your email campaigns is essential. Reporting and analytics should always be used to drive enhancements to your ongoing email marketing efforts. You might want to consider using a strong marketing automation platform for easier campaign management, greater effectiveness, better lead generation and nurturing, and more insightful analytics. The added bonus of engaging a marketing automation platform is how much it can help beyond email campaigns such as scheduling, testing, data insights, and analysis.

Be sure, too, to devote enough time and staff resources to create quality email templates and landing pages, as well as manage the email campaigns. At the end of the day, what matters is that your emails are opened and read, and you get the conversions.



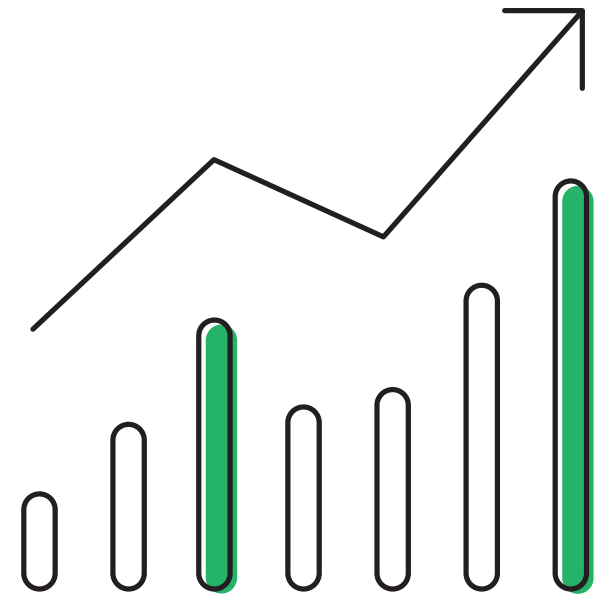
DIGITAL FOCUS AREA #5: ANALYTICS

MEASURE THE VALUE OF MARKETING WITH ANALYTICS

According to [HubSpot's 2018 State of Inbound report](#), 42% of marketers cited “proving the ROI of our marketing activities” as one of the biggest challenges they face within their company. Why is this? A common cause is a lack of clearly defined business goals paired with precision tracking measures that will enable the desired business insights.

Using digital marketing analytics allows you to identify how each of your marketing initiatives are performing, determine the true ROI of activities and understand how well you're achieving business goals. You can also diagnose tactics that aren't working for specific channels and make adjustments in real time to improve your overall marketing activity. Be sure to audit your analytics capabilities across channels, including Google, social media platforms, marketing automation and SEO tools, and help determine how they work together to measure audience engagement and behavior.

Overall, be sure to clearly define your goals and align your technology before you launch your next campaign and pull analytics to show the success of your initiatives.



Conclusion

DIGITAL MARKETING: TAKE A COMPLETE 360° VIEW

Digital marketing is about much more than just ad spend or email campaigns. Success in the digital space requires a comprehensive strategy using content that's flexible enough to adapt across channels and robust enough to engage highly-qualified leads.

With these best practices, you can begin to control and synchronize your message across owned, shared, paid and earned digital channels.



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