

# What is Digital Marketing and how can I best leverage it for my company?



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Digital marketing has, in theory, existed since the dawn of marketing websites in the 90's, but has become a real “thing” only in the last decade.

The official definition: Digital marketing encompasses all marketing efforts that use an electronic device or the internet.

The practical description is the act of connecting with prospects and customers using search engines, your website, articles/blogs, social media and email.

As more and more people continue to move to internet usage, the effectiveness and popularity of offline marketing continues to decline. Offline marketing includes print advertising, direct mail, and billboards, to name a few.

This means that as marketers, we need to adapt our strategy and tactics to leverage digital marketing, and hopefully more effectively than our competitors.

Let's review some of the most popular and effective elements of digital marketing and assess the components, benefits and applications for each.



## A powerful, engaging and informative website

I like to say that your website is the centerpiece of your digital marketing. It deserves and should receive the most planning, effort and TLC than any of the other elements in your digital marketing mix.

You've likely spent, or will spend, countless hours and a sizeable budget on driving people to your site. It makes perfect sense that you need to allocate appropriate resources into developing a website that performs well and creates conversions. A "conversion" might be the visitor submitting a "Learn More" form, contacting you on the phone, signing up for a webinar or purchasing a product.

In Marketing 101 we learned the AIDA formula - this applies very much to your website UX (user-experience). It should attract Attention, develop Interest, create a Desire, and solicit an Action.

Think about what important key advantages you offer that are unique and solve a problem for the prospect, and that speak to the market drivers that influence a purchase decision. (i.e. expertise, expansive capabilities, lower cost, more efficient, team approach, etc.) How can your website best convert a new prospect to a customer? What can you offer to existing clients to expand their business with you? What can you do to build up your brand recognition and brand loyalty and/or create more referrals?

The most important step is to construct a website creative brief that speaks to your strategic marketing goals, messaging and has specific tactics for lead nurturing and lead conversion. [Here](#) is a link to our Legend Website Creative Brief as an example.

To further your cause, make sure you have a plan for updating the site and keeping it fresh. A News/Blog page will provide a venue for featuring new content. You can speak about upcoming or past industry events and interesting news about your business. You should also repurpose content from emails and social posts to the News section of the site. Websites that get updated regularly get better search engine results as well, as they are considered more pertinent by Google.

If you aren't a graphic designer, marketing professional and programmer, consider hiring a professional studio or freelancer to assist you on this endeavor. Don't worry, even with their help, you will need to

contribute to the creative process and marketing strategy, since usually no one has more expertise on your business and your key advantages than you.

Install Google Analytics on your site. The results will allow you to assess which pages are getting the best results or the most traffic, see which calls to action are performing and if you are engaging your visitors enough to prevent them from bouncing away to a different site. Google Analytics will help you make informed decisions based on real data.



## Search Engine Optimization

SEO, or search engine optimization refers to how well you appear or rank on search engines for any given search word or phrase. If you sell hobby drones, for example, does your listing appear on the first page? Do you inaccurately appear when a government defense contractor is trying to research military drones?

Getting to the top of a Google search is the result of how well your site matched up to the search criterion that were entered as defined by Google's search algorithm. The factors that influence this perfect match are numerous, but include the amount of relevant content you have on your site, how often the site is updated and the age of your site.

Google first analyzes and interprets the words you have entered, as many words have multiple meanings.

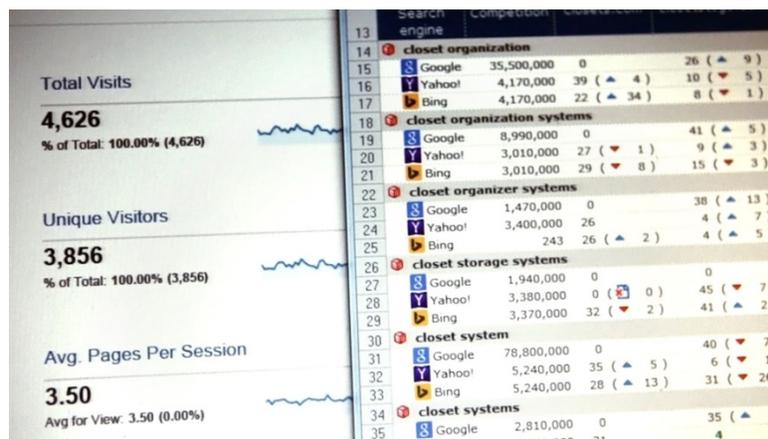
Google then looks for webpages with information that matches the search and look up the search terms in the index to find the appropriate pages. Google analyzes how often and where those keywords appear on a page, whether in titles or headings or in the body of the text.

Then your site is ranked determining where you will appear on the results. This ranking is determined by an algorithm that takes many factors into consideration, including the "freshness" of your content, the number of times the search terms appear and whether the page has a good user experience.

Some things you can do to improve your search engine results are:

- Relevant content – ensure that the content on your site uses the words and phrases that match up with the expected search queries your targeted prospects will be searching for.
- Update your content regularly – content that is updated frequently is viewed by Google as one of the best indicators of relevancy.

- Check your Metadata – this comes in 3 flavors: Title metadata, Description metadata and Keyword. Title metadata is the most important. Make sure your web developer has taken care of these steps.
- Descriptive links – When creating links in your text content, use descriptive text, not “click-here”. Google likes cross-links and back-links. Cross linking allows your business to get a visible online presence by helping people find their way to your website through a cross link from another website. Backlinking is another powerful SEO tool that can drastically improve your website’s online presence. These are the links that are solely directed towards a particular website.
- Use Alt Tags - An *alt tag*, also known as "alt attribute" and "alt description," is an HTML attribute applied to image tags to provide a text alternative for search engines. They describe your visual images and video media as alternative text descriptions. They help to allow search engines to locate your page.
- Site load speed - Both Google and Bing take page-loading speed into account in their website ranking algorithm. If visitors leave your site because they have to wait even just an extra few seconds for each page to load, that would increase your bounce rate and reduce the number of pages viewed – all of which can lower your SEO ranking.
- Mobile optimization - As of April 2015, Google has started to penalize sites that are not mobile optimized by bumping down their search engine ranking. This is particularly important for B2B marketing. Research has shown that 77% of B2B executives use their smartphone to research a product or service for their business.



## Paid Search / Paid Display Advertising

Paid search is a means for businesses to advertise within the sponsored listings of Google or other search engines. It can also be on a partner site by paying each time their ad is clicked (pay per click). Other flavors exist, such as display advertising, which is measured by how often the ad is displayed (CPM or cost per thousand) or when a phone contact is generated, which is ‘pay per call’.

PPC drives traffic to your website by paying a publisher every time your ad is clicked. One of the most popular types of PPC is Google AdWords, which allows you to pay for top positions on Google's search engine results pages at a price "per click". Other places where you can use PPC/online advertising include:

- Paid ads on Facebook
- Promoted Tweets on Twitter

## - Sponsored Messages on LinkedIn

Creating a campaign for a large company with lots of products or services can be somewhat daunting but getting started with a basic campaign is straight-forward. The basic steps involved are:

1. **Basic Planning** – What are your goals? Who is your audience? What is your budget? The answers to these questions will help you to construct an effective program that is tailored to your goals, the proper target demographic and within your budget parameters.
2. **Choose your Search Engine or Channel** – Google is the prolific and logical choice to start given it has the lions share of the traffic, is fairly easy to set up and manage budgets.

Google AdWords Express is Google AdWords for beginners. After a basic set up process, it automatically manages your online ads without the need for daily monitoring.

3. **Create your keyword list** - The next step in your campaign is to create a list of keywords. These keywords will trigger the ads that show on the search engine result pages (SERPs). It is important that you choose the most relevant keywords to avoid wasting money on clicks that don't perform.

Begin by writing down keywords you think your target audience would type to find your product or service. Put yourself in their shoes. For example, if I were searching for a painter in Evanston, Illinois, what terms and phrases would I type in the search bar to find the best results? How about "painter Evanston" or "painter in Evanston, Illinois."

Remember to consider synonyms and variations of a keyword. For example, "painter" could also be found under "painters" (the plural version), "painting service" or "home painters." Explore all possible options and include them in your initial keyword list.

Review, measure and evaluate your Paid Search results (analytics) on a regular basis. You can also run A/B comparisons of different ads to compare messaging and calls-to-action and clicks garnished.

**Google AdWords remarketing** is a form of online advertising that enables sites to show targeted ads to users who have already visited their site. Past visitors will see these ads while they are browsing the web, watching YouTube videos or reading news sites, for example—keeping your brand top-of-mind and enticing visitors to come back for more.

Remarketing, also known as retargeting, can dramatically increase your conversion rates. Past site visitors are already familiar with your brand and are more likely to become customers or complete other valuable actions on your site.

**Display advertising** (such as banner ads) is an online form of advertising in which the company's promotional messages appear on third party sites such as publishers or industry website channels. These ads are shown to your target audience when they are online, but not necessarily searching for your product or service. The main purpose of display advertising is to improve brand awareness, promote specific products or services and help to increase a purchase intention of consumers.



## Email Marketing

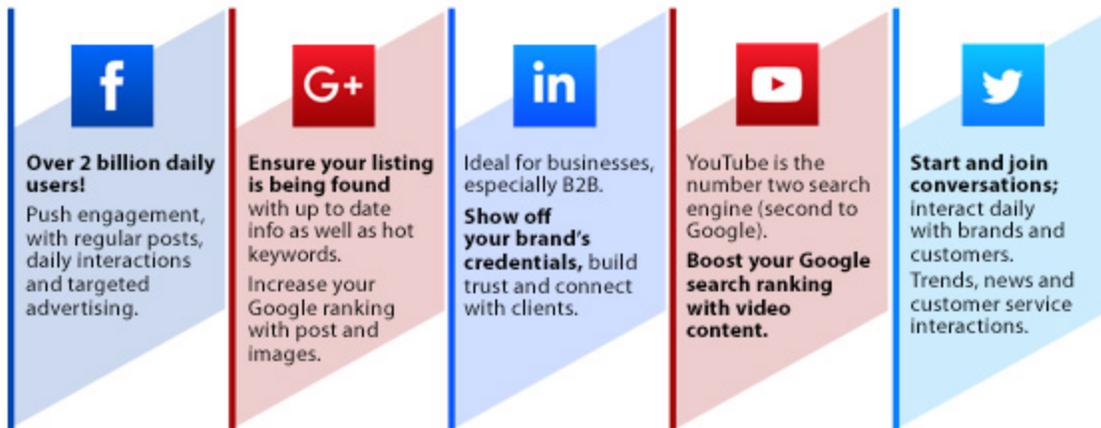
Email marketing as a method of communicating with your audiences. It is a fantastic way to keep your brand and messaging in the forefront of your customers on a regular basis. Email is often used to promote or introduce a product or service, share content, discounts and events, as well as to direct people toward the business's website. The types of emails you might send in an email marketing campaign include:

- Introducing or promoting your product or services.
- Conveying your key advantages.
- Educating your audience on relevant topics.
- Blog subscription newsletters.
- Follow-up emails to website visitors who downloaded something.
- Customer welcome emails.
- Promotions to loyalty program members.
- Tips or instructional emails for customer nurturing.

Who you send to is as important as what you are sending. You will need to define your audience, or audiences. In some cases, you will need to segment your contacts in groups. A simple example of this is creating one group for prospects, and one for existing clients/customers. This would allow you to tailor your message to each of these unique personas. If you are selling gardening and farm equipment, you might have one group that is “Commercial Farmers” and another group that are “Home Gardeners.”

Building a good clean list organically can take a long period of time, but you need to start somewhere. There are telemarketing campaigns and other promotions and events that can be undertaken that will help to grow your opt-in contact list at a faster rate.

More often than not, a 3<sup>rd</sup>-party email service company like Constant Contact or MailChimp are used to facilitate your email marketing campaign. They will help you build your campaigns, store your contact lists, post emails and distribute the new email issue. They can even help you to create the email layout using their templates, though many marketers prefer to create their own custom HTML layouts. These apps also provide analytics that reflect the performance of each campaign, including opens, clicks, the clicker’s email address and more.



## Social Media Marketing

Often referred to as SMM, social media marketing promotes your brand and messaging by sharing your content on social media channels to increase brand awareness, drive traffic, and generate leads for your business. It effectively creates a community around your brand. The channels you can leverage in social media marketing include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Snapchat, Pinterest, Google+.

Having new people interact with your content will increase brand awareness and help build your reputation as a business. Each post that is shared will be introduced to a new network of people, which can lead them to becoming potential customers, and the more people who know about your business, the better.

Every social media profile you add to your marketing mix is a funnel to your website, and every piece of content you post is another opportunity to acquire a new customer. By marketing on social media, you can effectively open your business to a wider variety of prospects.

With increased visibility from your social media marketing efforts, your business gains more opportunities for conversion. Every blog post, image, video or comment can lead viewers to your company's website and increase traffic. Social media marketing allows your business to give a positive impression by "humanizing" your brand/company. People prefer to do business with other people, rather than companies.



## Content Marketing

This term denotes the creation and promotion of content assets for the purpose of generating brand awareness, traffic growth, lead generation, and customers. Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience — and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action.

As referenced above, useful content should be at the core of your marketing and utilized generously across your digital marketing components. Content is key to driving inbound traffic and leads. Also, search engines reward businesses that publish quality, consistent content.

Content marketing includes things like educational blog posts, articles, info-graphics, whitepapers, e-books, videos, entertainment, and webinars that answer specific questions people have about issues related to your company, products, services, industry or discipline.

By becoming a credible, authoritative resource on topics that matter to potential customers, your business is more likely to get discovered by the right audience and earn their loyalty and trust – which, in turn, enables your brand to strengthen its customer relationships, grow an active and engaged subscriber base, and even increase its profits.

While there is some similarity in the phrases, Content Marketing and Inbound Marketing, it is widely agreed that Content Marketing is a sub-set (yet lifeblood) of Inbound Marketing. Where inbound marketing is generally regarded as “the methods that are taken to convert a visitor into a customer once they have ended up on a website.”



## Video marketing

Video marketing has grown exponentially in the past 10 years and has become a priority for marketers due to its powerful and engaging characteristics. It can be great content for nearly all of your marketing channels, including your website, social media and e-mail marketing. Video has become so prevalent in marketing campaigns that [one in four consumers](#) actually lose interest in companies that don't offer video.

Simply Measured found that Facebook videos are shared [1,200%](#) more than text posts and links.

Since video is currently accountable for [74% of online traffic](#), it's important for you to have a strong online presence. If your company is looking to improve its online activity or continue developing it, posting pertinent video content is a valuable way to gain attention. Increasing your online presence through video marketing is a proven method for building trust with your audience.

You might benefit from a [comprehensive corporate "sizzle" video](#) that covers all that you do and your unique advantages, or other video possibilities are:

- Product/Service "break-out" videos – a video series where you focus on one particular aspect of your business per each short video.
- Event videos – to capture a special event that you are hosting or involved with.
- Key advantages/interview videos – interview-style videos where employees talk about what makes your company/organization different or better than the competition.
- Customer testimonials – where your satisfied customers expound on how great you are.

## You now have the tools – now build it!

The digital marketing components listed above can be considered the essential building blocks for a successful campaign, but you still need to create a strategy and assemble your campaign. You will need to identify the unique aspects and key advantages of your company or organization and undertake a comprehensive marketing plan survey. These will guide you in the construction of a successful digital marketing campaign that leverages your "unique selling proposition", aligns with the market-drivers of your audience and is positioned to take advantage of industry opportunities that you have identified.

[Here](#) is a copy of our B2B Marketing survey for reference.