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Next Level Tools for Entrepreneurs & Small Business Owners



MARKETING SERIES

Digital Marketing

Why is this important?

A digital marketing plan is a document in which you strategically map out your digital marketing objectives, as well as the actions you'll take to achieve those objectives. Among other things, it can include business goals, digital strategies, and competitive landscape analysis as well as timelines, budgets, digital channels, and more.

Without a well-defined plan in place, your digital marketing efforts will be inefficient and ineffective – and it's likely you'll waste money and see diminished returns.

As digital marketing continues to grow and take over market share from traditional marketing, many small business founders and marketing managers are asking how much they should be spending on digital marketing.

The U.S. Small Business Administration suggests allocating 7-to-8% of your gross revenue to marketing and then spending approximately 50% of that marketing budget on digital marketing specifically. While this varies by industry, how long the company has been in business, and whether your business is B2B (Business to Business) or B2C (Business to Consumer), that guidance is reasonable and expected in current times.

As an example, if your revenue is \$1,000,000 you can expect to spend \$70,000-\$140,000 on total marketing. That would bring your digital marketing budget to between \$35,000 and \$70,000 for the year.



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How to create a Digital Marketing Plan

1. Define your digital marketing goals and business objectives

Clear, concise, measurable, and attainable digital marketing goals and business objectives with goals help you define exactly what you want to achieve and measure. You should also include specific numbers and timeframes to benchmark your progress.

For example, double organic search traffic in the next 12 months. This provides you with a deadline, a framework for setting milestone goals, and specific actions to take (e.g., optimize your site, create amazing content, and conduct strategic outreach for SEO, etc.).

2. Define audience segmentation and buyer personas

For any digital marketing campaign to be successful, you need to know who you're targeting. Segmenting your audience and then building buyer personas for each of those segments can provide you with insights about what types of marketing will be most effective.

Start by defining the different segments in your target audience. From there,

begin building out the personas of your ideal customer within each segment. Personas include specific information like age, gender, occupation, location, pain points, goals, and desires. When you understand the goals and struggles of a specific market segment, you can create highly relevant content that resonates more deeply with them. You'll know what messaging is most effective and how to get your message in front of each persona. More importantly, you'll find better ways to move them through your sales process.

Your buyer persona information will vary depending on whether you're Business to Business (B2B) or Business to Consumer (B2C) and the price of your product/service. Some demographic and additional information you may want to include is:

- Age range**
- Income**
- Job title**
- Location**
- Priorities**
- Goals**
- Challenges**
- Interests**
- Social media platforms**
- Industry**
- Pain points**
- Products/features desired**

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Your goal in creating personas is to get inside the minds of your target customers and to see things from their perspectives. When you understand what matters most to them, you can make a digital marketing plan that speaks to their deep desires and big challenges.

3. Conduct a competitive analysis and determine market share

In order to be effective in your marketing efforts, you need to know your competition. A competitive analysis allows you to identify your competitors, calculate your market share and determine the marketing strategies they employ.

When doing your competitive analysis, consider the following types of things:

- Which audience segments are they targeting?
- What digital marketing channels are your competitors using?

- Where are they strongest?
- Where are they weakest?
- What portion of their traffic is earned/owned/paid?
- What's their positioning in the market?
- What's their claimed differentiation?
- What type of messaging and specific language do they use?
- What is their tonality and brand personality?

A thorough competitive landscape analysis will give you insights into how you can use online marketing to surpass your competitors. For example, you may realize that your competitors' positioning and differentiation are well known, so you'll benefit from crystalizing your own in contrast. Or, you may discover they're

strong in social media marketing but weak when it comes to SEO performance.

4. Conduct a SWOT analysis

SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) is the counterpart to a competitive landscape analysis. It offers a framework to analyze your business against other forces in your market. Use this process to identify what's working, spot potential organic growth opportunities, and prepare for external threats. Organic growth opportunities may include an ecosystem of content, SEO, PR, word-of-mouth, emails, and social media that produces a flywheel effect that amplify your value proposition and increase organic sales.

Start by analyzing the **strengths** of your company. What are your primary advantages over your competition?



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Which things do you do particularly well? What unique resources do you have at your disposal?

Next, look at your **weaknesses**. What elements of your business aren't working particularly well? What things keep you from making sales? Where do you fall short of your competitors?

The third step is to look closely at the **opportunities** available to your company. Are there any market trends you can take advantage of? Can you utilize new technology that your competitors can't? Is there an under-served segment in your audience?

Finally, identify any potential **threats** to your business. Could a competitor steal market share? Are there any obstacles blocking growth? Are there potential financial issues on the horizon?

The data from your SWOT analysis will help you develop your digital marketing plan. Your plan should cater to your strengths, mitigate your weaknesses, move toward opportunities, and proactively avoid potential threats. All in the name of helping you to increase sales.

Social Media as an element of your Digital Marketing Plan

A lot goes into building a successful social media campaign—creative assets, social copy, paid strategy, reporting and much more. If you're using social media as a component of your digital marketing plan, you need a social media budget. As a general rule of thumb:

- B2B companies should allocate 2-5% of revenue to marketing
- B2C companies should allocate 5-10% of their revenue to marketing

Here's the average amount each size of business spends on digital marketing per year although numbers vary based upon gross revenue, product, distribution channels, etc.:

- Small businesses (<20 employees): \$30,000
- Mid-sized businesses (20-49 employees): \$60,000
- Large businesses (50 employees or more): more than \$100,000

Respective to the marketing spending above, the percentage allocation for social media aligned to consumer products is 21.8% for B:C social media campaigns. In the next five years, that percentage is forecast to rise to 25% as more consumer package goods brands utilize social media to greater degrees.

What should your social media budget plan include?

- Content creation - photography, video, talent, graphic design, copywriting, editing - content is critical to capturing your audience's interest and more importantly engagement.
- Software and tools - design, editing, video, monitoring, media analytics, etc.
- Paid Social Media campaigns



- Influencer marketing to expand your campaign reach
- Training
- Social strategy and management

Strategies to Fuel Organic Growth in your Digital Marketing Plan

1. Unite and amplify your marketing mix through Search Engine Optimization/SEO

SEO is the single most effective organic growth marketing strategy. The reality is that organic search is the only marketing channel that increases in value over time. Even if your SEO budget remains relatively fixed, the amount of traffic and revenue you generate goes up. That's because improved rankings lead to greater visibility which translates to more backlinks which improves visibility, and so on. Compare this to digital channels like PPC (pay per click), where you get a fixed, temporary, more modest return on ad spend. In other words, you get no more — or no less — than what you pay for. In fact, Google openly acknowledges that the ROI on SEO is 5.3X compared to just 2X for paid search advertising.

Beyond that, you can also leverage SEO to improve brand awareness and sentiment, leading to greater brand equity. As a result, you'll reduce risk and control your messaging more effectively.

Why is organic search so effective at driving growth? One of the big reasons is that it exactly mirrors the way your audience is thinking at the precise moment they are most receptive to your message. SEO allows you to come alongside potential customers and provide them with content, answers, and solutions that actually helps them

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and supports their buyer journey - and the lifetime value of your brand.

2. Develop engaging high-value content that's differentiated from your competitors and memorable.

Content 'wins' when it:

- Evokes an emotional response
- Solves a customer problem, or answers a question
- Inspires or uplifts
- Tells/shares stories that resonate with customers
- Includes an element of surprise

3. Track SEO Metrics / Performance

Whether you look at rankings, traffic, engagement, leads, orders, revenue, or authority, SEO metrics give you key insights into exactly how your organic search strategy performs and the impact of your digital marketing plan. SEO metrics include:

- New Referring Domains
- Domain Authority/Domain Rating
- On-page Optimization
- Text Readability

- Impressions
- CTR/Click Through Rate
- Keyword Ranking
- Organic Visibility/Organic Market Share
- Organic Traffic
- Organic Conversions
- Number of Pages Indexed
- Page Speed
- Pages per visit
- Crawl errors
- Bounce rate

4. Tools to track SEO metrics

There are a several tools that make it easy to measure the top SEO metrics.

Use Google Analytics for tracking metrics like organic search traffic, pages per visit, and bounce rate. Use Google Search Console for monitoring impressions, CTR from the Google Serach Engine Results Pages (SERP), crawl errors, and number of pages indexed.

Ahrefs, Moz, and SEMRush help you stay on top of new referring domains, domain authority, and keyword

rankings. ContentKing, Lumar, and Screaming Frog make it possible to identify technical errors within your site and then fix them. Google PageSpeed Insights and Pingdom help you measure page load time. Use Yoast and Clearscope for on-page optimization and text readability.

Ahrefs - [Ahrefs - SEO Tools & Resources To Grow Your Search Traffic](#)

Moz - [Moz Pro 30 Day Free Trial - Moz](#)

SEMRush - [Semrush - Online Marketing Can Be Easy](#)

ContentKing - [Real-time SEO Auditing & Monitoring Platform - ContentKing for Conductor \(contentkingapp.com\)](#)

Lumar - [Lumar — Eye-Opening Website Intelligence.](#)

Screaming Frog - [SEO Agency - Screaming Frog](#)

Pingdom - [Website Monitoring Service - Availability and Performance | Pingdom](#)

Yoast - [SEO for everyone • Yoast](#)

Clearscope - [Clearscope: The A++ SEO content optimization platform](#)

Business Sense is a no-fluff source of information that gets right to the heart of what small business owners need: essential tools and informational resources to help their businesses grow. Written by our team of business coaches, this series shares their decades of experience in areas such as financials, operations, sales and marketing, human resources, leadership, and governance. Business Sense is designed to provide entrepreneurs and small business owners in various sectors, including agriculture, forestry, waste management, renewable energy, and environmental technology, with recommendations and practical advice to help their businesses not only survive but thrive.

Our business management coaching and Business Sense Resource Guide are designed to accelerate the growth of the enterprises we work with and expand the leadership capacity of the entrepreneurs who own and manage these businesses.

Let Us Help You and Your Business

The Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund provides tailored business management coaching, entrepreneurial support, and training to position Vermont-based entrepreneurs and small business owners in our designated market sectors for growth and long-term success. We partner with state government, private sector businesses and nonprofit organizations to build a thriving economic, social and ecological future for Vermont. Learn more at [VSJF.org](#)



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