



2018 Digital Business Essentials

Today's digital world is transacting 24/7, so your business should be working accordingly. In this ebook we list some of the digital essentials to keep your business front and centre of the market and at the top of searches to attract and retain new customers.



2018 Digital Business Essentials.

In this ebook you will find:

- 4 steps to inbound marketing
- Developing a digital marketing strategy - 6 'must do's'
- 16 search engine optimisation (SEO) success tips to boost ranking
- 7 critical social media tips
- 11 tips for Google AdWords and Facebook advertising
- A word on remarketing
- 6 things to automate in your business right away



4 steps to inbound marketing

Today's marketing world is inbound meaning that instead of solely putting your brand in front of customers through advertising, your business will be more effective if they're also coming to you. This is because of the myriad of information available online, competition in the market and the fact that shoppers will research a brand before they walk into a store or decide to make a purchase. So, if your brand isn't ranking in searches, or isn't pulling in customers, consider developing your digital presence through inbound content marketing. While a multitude of inbound strategies have been developed, all designed to attract, convert, close and delight your inbound customers, these are the four stages of inbound marketing. SEO is constantly changing, so the blog post, website pop up or e-book that worked yesterday might not work as effectively today.

1. Attract

Create relevant content to attract the right market at the right time to your landing page or website and turn them into visitors. It could be a free ebook, a white paper or a special deal posted on the platforms where your ideal buyers spend most of their time.

2. Convert

This step is designed to turn visitors into leads by opening up a conversation in whichever way works - usually through a form which asks for their details in exchange for the aforementioned content. This step enables you to build a database to market to. Tip: the larger, more in-depth or specialised the content, the more details you can ask in the form.

3. Close

You've attracted the right visitors and turned them into leads - the next step is transforming them into customers. This step requires nurturing your leads through content marketing to build rapport and trust. This stage can take several weeks or months depending on the content you have scheduled and when your leads are ready to buy.

4. Delight

Create a remarkable experience always, whichever stage your customers are at. Ensure you continue to build rapport with new and existing customers through valuable content and exceptional service.

The way to tie inbound marketing all together is automation - so that when a visitor subscribes to your blog or books a consultation, it automatically triggers follow-up emails containing valuable information to build brand trust and show you care. [Infusionsoft](#) is the gold standard for businesses and start-ups requiring a marketing solution containing automation from email marketing to effective lead capture plus it lets you A/B test your way to the perfect email. Platforms like [Hootsuite](#) and [Sprout Social](#) let you schedule and automate posts and optimise them for most engagement.

Whilst it can be tricky and take trial and error, inbound marketing is still one of the most effective ways of driving new leads to your website and a critical part of marketing.



Developing a digital strategy - 6 must do's

No matter what digital strategy you choose, you need to know your customers inside out, source all the data you can, and take the steps to strengthen your brand to attract them.

This section covers the basics (and beyond) to get you thinking and discussing ways to attract the attention of your market and turn them into customers.

Ensure you have the following in place:

1. A clear picture of your market

The first step to a successful business is a clear-cut picture of who your customer is, so you can use the most effective channels to reach them in the most effective way. Do you sell custom-embossed tech accessories to females aged 25-40, working in corporate? You could do a targeted Facebook campaign to specifically reach these demographics. Trying to appeal to everyone will water down your brand, so have a clear picture of what your customers do and like, what their pain points are and what solutions you have. There are many tools to study and understand your market inside out and develop a comprehensive picture of your ideal buyer. Firstly, be certain of the pain point you are tackling and the way you stand apart. Talk to your market and arrange focus groups to create more insight into your customers. Measure, test and refine everything you do.

2. A clear picture of the competition - but don't focus on them too much

Sign up to their newsletters, look at their blogs and social and see what questions their customers are asking. Watch your competitors so you can do things differently and learn from their mistakes. But focus what you can do instead of constantly looking outside.

3. Strong branding

Your brand is just as critical as the strategy you take. The most successful brands have a personality, create emotional connection, give their customers an experience and are real and honest. Plus they encourage user-generated content (in addition to influencers) and test and measure everything. Your branding should be congruent across every aspect of your business - from design, copy, communication and service to marketing, PR, your shopfront or ecommerce store and the way you treat your team. Take notice of on and off page SEO, online reputation, testimonials and reviews as part of your branding.

4. Tracking and measuring

Various free online tools are available for measuring how your website is performing, which is critical in tracking and testing what works and what doesn't. Google Analytics allows you to analyse your website traffic - what parts of your campaigns are converting the most and at what points visitors leave your site - visit [Google Analytics](#). It can also track brand coverage & ROI Google Search Console checks your site for search results, click-through rates and any errors like broken links, plus tests if Google can make sense of your content, which is essential for SEO. [Click here](#) to get started. Down the track you might choose a media monitoring company like Slice to pick up print and digital coverage.



5. A focus on always evolving

Plan how you will turn your initial strategy into lasting success. Interest will lead to brand awareness, engagement and sales. It doesn't have to happen all at once - and it usually won't! It takes time for your customers to get to know, like and trust your brand. It's a fast-paced world and no business can afford to rest on its laurels. Even large and established corporations have gone by the wayside from not adapting and remaining relevant. So stay on track in your business and strive to continuously learn and evolve.

6. Preparation

Ensure every detail of your strategy is in place before launching a campaign. Be consistent, especially if your method requires communication with customers. Great service creates great reviews which can boost SEO.

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

Search engines like Google, Yahoo and Bing rank websites based on what they consider most relevant to users. The easier you can make it for the end user (your customer) to use your site, and the more attractive and relevant the content, the higher you will rank and the more likely they will find you.

Keep these SEO ranking tips in mind:

1. Keyword research

Keyword research is one of the highest return SEO activities which is key to marketing success. It's the path to knowing which keywords are lemons and which set you on course for SEO success. It is a time-consuming process so you might want to outsource it to a digital agency, but there are plenty of how-to articles covering the topic too. When doing SEO research think like your customer. What search terms are they using to find you? [This article](#) breaks this in-depth topic down. Use your keywords in blogs and landing pages, but don't overuse them or let them compromise the content. It's about ensuring the information effectively answers your customer's search query and makes them want to find out more.

2. Quality content and linking

Landing pages containing valuable, original content, keywords and links is a critical factor in search engine ranking. Is the content custom-written to your customer? Does it contain a viable solution instead of just a sales pitch? A link from any large, respectable site will rate higher than a comment on a blog. Links from similar sites which are topically relevant also count. Search engines see the link text (the words within a link) as the way a website is describing another. So if you can suggest the words people use to link to you, do so! How many links? 1,000 links from one great site is not as good as 1,000 quality, genuine links from 1000 sites. Guest posting, testimonials and working on link reclamation are all ways to link back to your website and boost SEO. Ensure you internal link too - include links to similar or related blogs you've already posted.



3. Create new content

Search engines love fresh, original content. Don't expect blogs from two years ago to make the cut, unless you're in an uncluttered market. Ensure you're covering up-to-date topics and information.

4. Think 'vertical'

As well as 'horizontal' searches, people may also click on vertical search results like images, videos, news, and shopping. If you have quality content in these areas, it's more likely to show up in search results.

5. Mobile-friendly

Ensure your website is mobile-friendly. If your website doesn't render to mobile, it automatically loses credibility and is penalised in Google. You can check your [site here](#). More Google searches occur on mobiles than on desktops, hence Google ranks mobile-friendly sites higher. If you have an app, consider using app indexing which indexes apps just like websites.

6. Website speed and security

Google knows your customers want information fast. A faster loading website will make a stronger search experience to put you ahead of competitors. HTTPS servers also provide better security for visitors and Google rewards sites which use HTTPS.

7. Title tags

HTML titles specify the title of a web page in the search result. They are a critical element which search engines use to decipher what a page is about. If your HTML titles are deemed bad or not descriptive, Google changes them. Look at your keyword search and write a descriptive title for each page.

8. Meta description tags

The meta description tag is the 160 character snippet under the title used to summarise a web page's content. The meta tag lets you to suggest how you want pages described in search listings. It contains the keywords which the user searched - highlighted in bold and lets visitors decide if they want to click your link. They impact ranking too.

9. Descriptive URLs

Use descriptive keywords in your URLs, the text which appears in the bar at the top of the page, to boost ranking.

10. Header tags

Header tags are a formal way to identify key sections of a web page. Search engines use them as clues for what a page is about. If the words you want to be found for are in header tags, you have an increased chance of appearing in searches for those words. Don't go overboard. Use logical headers and sub-headers which make sense.



11. Is your site an authority?

Is it widely recognised as leader in its field? Does your site receive lots of quality links, social references and engagement metrics (time spent interacting on your site)? Keep an eye out too on negative comments and reviews which can damage authority and decrease ranking.

12. Create a great user experience

Do your users interact with your site? How long do they stay? Do they bounce back to Google to search again? Search engines measure all of this interaction to decide whether users are truly engaging with your site. Longer stays enhance SEO.

13. Don't duplicate content

Google penalises duplicate content within your website and with others. Ensure everything is original and that nothing is replicated.

14. Personalisation

Did you know that everyone's search results are different? They're based on location, what sites you've visited in the past and what links you've clicked. It makes sense that if your site isn't seen as relevant to a particular location, you won't appear in those search results. You can boost location-based SEO by setting up a Google My Business Account, create location-based content, adding location URLs to your Google My Business page and ensuring all of your contact details are up to date. You can also use Google AdWords to run location-based ads. Setup a Google My Business Account to integrate information straight into AdWords.

15. Social reputation and posting

Content which is posted from your site on social media platforms can pick up links or gain engagement which is a direct contribution to your ranking success. The aim is to gain references from social accounts with good reputations and have your own social presence felt. The key is to participate, like and comment. If your content is interesting and relevant, then followers will want to share it. See more information in the social media section below.

16. Develop an SEO strategy

This is heavily tied into your keyword research and content marketing (preferably inbound). If you have the budget but not the time, and want to focus on your strengths and core business, then strongly consider outsourcing your SEO strategy to a digital agency.



Social Media

If your business isn't on Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, Instagram and Twitter, it's missing out. Social media can create buzz and build following, brand and sales. Yet the social media marketplace is crowded. To succeed you must spend time and post relevant and original content to boost engagement. It's why many businesses outsource social media.

Whether you're taking on the task yourself, keeping it in-house or outsourcing, these are a few social marketing essentials which may increase your exposure in the market.

1. Video is key

In a cluttered market, no content grabs fleeting attention like video. Social media marketers are moving towards video content to drive leads and conversions to their websites. Like all of your other content, video should be relevant, original and compelling.

2. Tailored content

Think customised solutions which speak directly to customers. In today's content-centric world, generic information just doesn't make the cut - the expectation is a tailored experience. Tools like marketing automation software is making tailored content easier to implement. Think about how you can create a personalised product or service in the digital space.

3. Create a data-driven content strategy

Today it's easier than ever to develop data-driven strategies through a variety of social media campaigns - there's an array of information available which lets you easily target specific sectors down to age, industries and interests. Instead of the mass-marketing approach, social media marketers are perfecting their content strategy and rolling out precise, targeted and budget conscious campaigns to capture the attention of the right audience.

4. Ask questions

The more you know about your market, the more insight you will have to engage with them. Ask questions, conduct surveys, hold focus groups and reflect the findings in your strategy. Social media polls are an effective way to boost engagement. They are easy to set up and (if you keep them simple) require very little of your audience. In return for a few carefully crafted questions, you'll receive great insights into your market. It's a trend that's gaining momentum as people love to be asked their opinion and to give it!

5. Hashtag away

Hashtags are critical to continue attracting new followers. Each social media platform differs in the use of hashtags so research is required. A good place to start is seeing how others in your industry are using hashtags. Hootsuite has a [comprehensive hashtag guide for businesses](#).



6. Meaningful posts

Keeping posts meaningful (wherever possible) is key to keeping your audience plugged into your brand. Your followers are more likely to like, share and comment on meaningful and authentic content which will let more users see you in their feed.

7. Capitalise on current events

Keep your finger on the pulse of your audience. Tune into what they're tuning into when it comes to news, events and trends. Connecting with them about what they're interested in will make your brand even more relevant. Relate it back to your business in the most effective way you can.

Digital Advertising

There are many online advertising platforms all vying for your spend. This section looks at the two largest - Google AdWords and Facebook Advertising.

Google AdWords

AdWords remains one of the most highly advanced digital advertising platforms. It lets you put your brand in front of a highly-targeted audience in moments. But you can also waste many hours and dollars without ever reaching your marketing goals if you don't use it effectively.

These are 7 tips to point you in the right direction.

1. Your account structure

Google AdWords is all about relevancy, and you can reduce your cost-per-acquisition (CPAs) by improving the structure of your account. Carefully choose your keywords, ads and ad groups in each campaign to relate to your market. The closer you hit the mark, the less the cost of each ad.

2. Search network campaigns

Search network campaigns allow you to finely target your ideal market. Unlike marketing on the Display network, which interrupts your prospects as they browse the web, Search network targets prospects who have taken an action by searching for a solution. This qualifies them and makes them more likely to convert to a lead or customer. If you launch on the Search network, you'll also gather contextual keywords that can be carried over to the Display network.

3. Set low daily budgets and cost-per-clicks (CPCs)

When you launch a new AdWords campaign, it's hard to know how much traffic your ads will get and how fast you'll go through your advertising budget. To avoid a blowout in the first few days with little conversion, set your daily budget to half or even a quarter of the actual daily budget. It will allow you to test and monitor how your traffic is performing based on your targeting.



4. Ad images and copy

It's critical to get this part right but it takes practise and a little trial and error. You want to strike the right balance between attracting the right prospects and not attracting the tyre kickers who will eat away at your ad budget with every click. Split-testing is the way to approach this. Select your two top ad ideas and track your results. One will always outperform the other and the results may surprise you. Continue to build on the success of the winning ad. Images are just as critical. They need to attract the attention of your market and make them want to click the ad, so they must make you stand out from the competition. You can split test this too until you find the most effective image.

5. Testing and tracking

Another core part of the campaign process is testing and tracking. Initially your CPAs are going to be higher than your desired CPAs. Testing different keywords, ads and bid strategies will let you find the right combinations to meet your goals. Google help pages provide detailed information on how to properly place the AdWords conversion tags for tracking onto landing pages eg: your thank you page.

6. The right device

A high percentage of your AdWords traffic will be coming from mobile devices. Desktop and mobile traffic can produce different results. You can categorise campaigns by device type which allows you to set bids separately, create different funnels and track the results by device.

7. Negative keywords

The less restrictive the keyword match type on the Search network the higher the chances are for your ad to be triggered by search phrases that have nothing to do with your products and services. The way to avoid this is to use the 'keyword search terms' tool to weed out unwanted keywords from your campaigns. You can add these phrases as negative keywords which stop your ad from showing when these phrases are used in searches.

Facebook Advertising

If you want to stand out from the crowd on Facebook, you'll need more than just great content. How do you get your Facebook content in front of your target audience?

Here are a few pointers to help.

1. Who are you targeting?

You don't need to reach everybody, just the right bodies!



Ensure you know:

- All your market demographics
- How they communicate
- What language they use
- What platforms they use
- What type of content they engage with
- When they engage and
- How frequently

Fortunately Facebook has all the data you'll probably ever need on your target audience and you'll find it in your page insights. Study the data to learn about your audience and then you can create even more targeted ads and messages to reach them.

2. Communicate through stories

When you're creating your Facebook Ads remember it's all about connecting. Stories are essential if you're to capture the interest of your target customers. Consider the difference between 'telling' them what you do and 'sharing' your story and why you do what you do. There's a subtle, yet profound difference.

3. Test, track and adjust

The upside of online advertising like Facebook Ads is you can track the performance of your ads as soon as your campaign is live. If you track-as-you-go through your Facebook Ads Manager, you can fine-tune based on the results. You might need to tweak your call-to-action, try a different photo or ad copy, or take another look at your targeting parameters. It's so much more effective than waiting until the end.

4. The right measurement

'How you will measure the performance of your ad?'. This is an important question to ask upfront before you commence your campaign. For certain businesses it's brand awareness, others want email subscribers and many want warm leads. Ensure you're clear on your desired outcome and how you're going to measure your ROI.

A word on retargeting

Have you ever wanted to buy something online, and keep seeing it until you eventually give in and buy? It's not a sign but retargeting - a digital tool that lets you re-attract website visitors. We've simplified this down in a way that's easy to understand.

Retargeting is a concept that puts ads in front of individuals who've interacted with your brand in some way, shape or form - either clicking an ad, visiting your website or interacting with an email you sent.

While retargeting is only a small piece of the marketing picture, it puts your brand in front of interested leads multiple times, keeping it front and centre of their purchasing decisions. Consider boosting your business by re-attracting your warmest leads through retargeting.



Why retargeting is critical to attract new customers

Every business wants to win back visitors who didn't convert the first time and retargeting increases conversions. Through retargeting, you can re-attract the visitors who didn't take the action you wanted and pull them back in.

For example, if you're a retailer and a visitor clicks on a product in your website, then leaves, retargeting creates ads of that product that follows them around the web. This way, they're seeing the item they've considered purchasing multiple times. Once they've seen the ad enough times and click on it, it takes them straight back to the page where they can complete the action you want - in this case, makes the purchase.

Put yourself in the shoes of the customer - have you ever wanted to buy something and keep seeing it until you eventually give in and buy? It isn't not a supernatural sign - it's retargeting. Retargeting acts as a digital reminder to potential clients who are exposed to thousands of brands every day - keeping you front and centre of their purchasing decisions.

How retargeting works

There are two main types of retargeting - pixel-based and list-based. Pixel retargeting is the most common type. Basically when someone comes to your website, a piece of JavaScript, referred to as a pixel, is placed on their browser. This makes their browser 'cookie'd'. When they leave your site, that cookie notifies retargeting platforms to show specific ads based on the specific pages they visited.

The second type of retargeting is list-based - where you upload a list of emails to a retargeting campaign (frequently on a social site like Facebook or Twitter), which will identify users on that platform and send retargeting ads just to them. Though less common, this type of retargeting is much more specific because you choose who's on each list and it's not solely based on actions like visiting a page.

Tip: Segmentation of consumers through list-based retargeting is an effective strategy. For instance, [targeting millennials through social media](#) platforms can increase your reach as they constitute a larger percent of online users. The trick to maximizing retargeting ads through lists is with a strategically strong message and this requires knowing your target market inside out.

Choosing a retargeting platform

There are several retargeting platforms to select from, whether you choose social media (list) or web retargeting. These include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn or Google AdWords, and third party sites like PerfectAudience, AdRoll, Retargeter and Bizo. Social media platforms and Google AdWords have the capacity to target leads based on emails. The emails you collect as a business and in the day-to-day world are a start. You can build an email list from leads sourced through marketing and opt-ins. Opt-in leads are giving you direct permission to market to them via email.



You should check the analytics of your website when undertaking web retargeting. Knowing the general patterns of visitors on your site will enable you to create the most effective ads to follow them around.

6 things to automate in your business right away

Automate these 6 things to make your business work harder, even while you sleep. By taking these steps, you can save hours in your week and stop sweating the small stuff – giving you more time to focus on the parts of the business you love, like strategy, development, expansion or scaling up.

Sales

In addition to inbound marketing, every aspect of your sales should be automated too – from instant invoicing to email notifications if a shopper leaves their cart, transaction confirmation and automated shipping these should all be ingrained into the basics of your business.

Box documents up

Store and send information and collaborate in real time without cluttering up inboxes or spending hours flicking documents back and forth. [Dropbox Business](#) is a cloud storage solution that's a simple way to collaborate without missing a thing.

Payroll and HR

While having a bunch of talented staff to work with is amazing, juggling their payslips, holidays and sick leave takes time. If you have a small business, chances are you are the HR department but thankfully platforms like Xero let you automate these functions from a single system to cut hours of time.

Passwords

Business automation requires a clutch of digital platforms to succeed. From posting on social media to measuring website performance in Google Analytics and email marketing in MailChimp, a typical day can see you switching from five to 10 different platforms. Every secure platform requires a password so you might be juggling as many as 20 or 30 every day. [1password](#) is a nifty app which stores all of them securely in one convenient place, which you just need one password to access.

Email responses

Can sending the same email over and over – and automate emails using Canned Responses. This automation feature lets you pre-type and store standard email responses, then, when the time comes to send a response, just select the appropriate one and click send. [Learn to setup canned responses in Gmail.](#)

Groceries

Don't limit online shopping to ASOS and Amazon – automate groceries through a click and collect service to save valuable time searching aisles. Many smaller suppliers and fast-thinking start-ups also have subscription services so you can have every day essential items sent right to you. [Toothcrush](#) delivers an eco-friendly toothbrush straight to your front door every month or two and has free shipping to boot.



Bartercard - gain a competitive edge in business

Since launching 25 years ago, Bartercard has collectively saved its small business members \$4.5 billion - freeing up cash to enhance their business through strategies like digital marketing.

Bartercard is the world's largest cashless business marketplace where members are trading everything from a hamburger to a multi-million development, holidays, retail products and services to stay ahead of the curve.

By exchanging products and services without using cash, businesses are boosting cash flow, attracting new customers and increasing sales.

Ask us how we can assist your business - visit bartercard.co.nz or call 0800 639 287.

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