

Five Digital Marketing Trends and Why You Should Care

By Jim Bierfeldt



Create an online experience...that makes them think, "I've arrived at the right place."

I T'S TOUGH ENOUGH for top 3PL executives to keep up with logistics trends, much less what's happening in the marketing world. So we put together this brief primer on digital marketing trends that you should consider as you market your logistics business, either now or in the near future.

■ #1 – Mobile Computing

Remember when prospects and customers that interacted with you online did so from their desk computer? Today, over 60 percent of online traffic is from mobile devices, so it's critical that your site render well on mobile phones and tablets. And it's not just about your site delivering a good online experience. Thanks to Google's latest algorithm change this past spring, non-mobile-friendly sites are now being penalized in search rankings for mobile searches, lowering traffic volume to these sites.

Action: Take Google's mobile-friendly test at www.google.com/webmasters/tools/mobile-friendly. If your website is not mobile-friendly, fix it. Adopt the mindset of a sales prospect and experience your website from their point of view – from a desktop, tablet and phone. How does everything look? Can you easily download documents and fill out forms?

■ #2 – Personalization and Custom Content

If you're one of Amazon's 244 million customers, the website will greet you with a personal message – "Hello, Harry" – and specific suggestions on what to buy based on your own interests and purchase history. Well, the same approach has already come to business-to-business websites. Custom content improves the visitor experience by directing people to information that is most relevant to them. Put in logistics terms, it's about delivering the right message, to the right place, at the right time.

What's possible with personalization?

- Welcome returning visitors by name on your homepage
- Tailor content based on the visitor's location, device or referral source
- Tailor content based on where a repeat visitor is in the sales cycle
- Change the content of automated emails based on actions recipients take to previously sent emails

Action: Determine if your current web platform enables the customization of both web content and automated emails.

■ #3 – Content Marketing

If you're not sure what this is, you may want to bone up. Marketing pros rate it the #1 commercially important digital marketing trend for 2015 (Smart Insights). Content marketing relies on creating and sharing helpful information, such as blog posts, white papers and videos, to attract people to your website. Prospects get the useful information they need, and you develop relationships that may lead to future sales. In today's marketing landscape, you might say "helpful is the new sexy."



"Okay, run it past me one more time... how will increased web traffic help us get to ten million in new sales?"

A couple of things to know about the logistics executives to whom you sell. They don't care about you; they care about their own fears, problems and goals. And they hate annoying and interruptive sales calls and unsolicited emails.

The best way to engage them is to *give them a reason to find you*. Create content about how to solve their biggest problems and share that content, either directly or by posting it where they are most likely to see it. In other words, be helpful. (You're looking sexier already.)

Action: Move away from old-school marketing tactics that annoy and interrupt and toward sharing information that helps your best prospects solve their problems.

■ #4 – Social Media Marketing

Among logistics businesses, there is a wide range of involvement on social media, from nothing at all to having full-time staff members driving ongoing interactions on LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and other channels. Certainly, as millennials rise from foot soldiers to generals in supply chain organizations, social media marketing will become an increasingly important tool to market logistics products and services.

Today, there is an expectation that companies will have a social presence to facilitate online interaction with customers and prospects. While they may not yet expect an immediate response to a "Where's my shipment?" tweet, make no mistake that's coming, so start gearing up. In the meantime, think of social sites as simply communities where you can share your point of view and have meaningful interactions with those who share your interests...like a roundtable discussion on a key logistics topic at an industry conference, except here the meeting never ends.

Action: Define a social media strategy. Establish or enhance your presence on major social media platforms, particularly on LinkedIn – the top choice among senior executives who look to connect via social media.

■ #5 – Conversion and ROI

Marketing expenses often get the closest shave at budget time. Why? Because marketers fail to adequately measure the impact of marketing on the company's bottom line. That's changing because the digital marketing techniques in use today are inherently more measurable. Says digital marketing expert, Peter Ingersoll, "You can learn who opened your message, who clicked to learn more, who

took action and, ultimately, who became a customer – essentially creating a closed-loop system to measure lead acquisition and sales."

For this to happen you need the right systems, including a tight link between your web marketing and your CRM/sales-pipeline management system. Some modern marketing tools, like Hubspot, combine marketing and CRM/sales management into a single all-in-one platform. Such tools make marketing-ROI calculation easier, but they are not required. The key is to figure out, for yourself, how well your marketing investments are translating into revenue and profits.

The good news is, the tools exist today to answer this question.

Action: Determine the metrics that will define marketing "success," then figure out, with your marketing and sales teams, how to objectively measure these metrics using new or existing systems.

■ Digital Marketing: The Challenge is Simple

These days, logistics products and services are *bought*, not *sold*. Your best prospects don't need you to educate them; they have access to an endless supply of information and they're using that power to get smarter – about strategies to solve tough challenges, and the companies best able to help.

In this context, your digital marketing challenge becomes quite simple: Get found when they're looking and then create for prospects an online experience that's so simple, so personal and so relevant that it makes them think, "I've arrived at the right place."

Jim Bierfeldt is president of Logistics Marketing Advisors, a marketing company that helps logistics businesses define and communicate their value, and then translate that value into revenue.

Additional information about Logistics Marketing Advisors can be seen at www.logisticsmarketing.com.

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