



International Association of
WOMEN

Marketing Your Business Online



Introduction

The internet allows you to go toe-to-toe with the biggest competitors in your space and carve out a niche for your services. But it requires more than a blanket approach to marketing and promotion. Being successful, even as a small services firm or consultant, requires a keen understanding of your target audience, what they need from you, and how to communicate the benefits of your services to them.

Danielle Tenconi, a brand marketing expert and consultant who has worked with Axe, Moet, and Energizer, shared her four-step process for marketing a business online in a 2017 webinar.

Based on her insightful presentation, this eBook will guide you through these four steps, outlining how to identify your target audience, connect with them, and convert online visibility into paying customers and sales.





Targeting Is Critical

Before you spend a dime on your business online, the single most important thing you can do is determine whom you will target and how they need to be targeted. Most businesses have at least a rough sense of an “ideal customer” avatar, but this process goes well beyond that. You need to ask some very important questions to unearth what drives interest in what you do.

Many business people get stressed out at this stage, worried that they will make a mistake or lock themselves into a strategy that might not work in the future. Your business evolves and will continue to evolve, not only as the market changes, but as you work with more people and learn more about your customers. So, stay focused, knowing that you will be able to adjust all along the way—taking what you learn from this process and applying it to your business as it grows.

The Key to Smart Targeting

“How do you know whom to target?”

It’s the internet. You can engage with quite literally anyone you want at any time. But how do you narrow it down from “everyone” to the very specific people who will benefit from your services? Here are some questions to ask yourself:

01

Where is the source of growth? – What will you sell or offer that will help your business grow? Are you missing a potential channel or vertical to target or is there a resource that allows you to get more from your efforts?

02

Where do you want to play? – What competitors are you eyeing and what platforms or audiences do you hope to invest time into?

03

Who are the customers of your competitors? – At the same time, what are your competitors doing? You don’t necessarily need to copy them, but if they are investing in a certain space and targeting a specific audience, there’s probably a good reason.

04

Who is currently buying from you? – Look at your current customers. They may not be your ideal customers, but they buy from you for a reason. What do you know about them that you can use to identify the target audience for your new offering or expansion?

05

Who don’t you want to target? – Even more importantly, who do you not want to work with? If there are existing customers you’d rather not have, or your competitors are going after certain audiences you want to avoid, now is the time to map them out.

06

What data supports your decision? – Finally, do you have data to support your efforts? Do the sites you want to work with have the traffic and audience to back your efforts? Is there a large enough market to support your new product idea? Are competitors even successful?

There is a very big difference between your ideal persona—the target individual that you will identify from the above list—and an influencer who might have an impact on that persona. As you evaluate the answers to these questions, try to identify both. Who is the person you want on the phone discussing a potential sale with you, and who is the blogger, video personality, public speaker, or author that your ideal prospects go to with their questions before they're ready to buy?

Take time to evaluate the differences here, to better understand how your ideal persona can be influenced by certain thought leaders you will identify, and to recognize how shoppers who stumble across your services can be part of this matrix.





Identifying Your People

At a high level, you should have a sense of who your target audience is, who has influence over them, and how they shop online. You can glean a lot of this from competitor websites, blogs, and the social media platforms where these people are having conversations.

But to build a truly successful online marketing strategy, you need to identify these people and build a plan for communicating with them. That takes time and close attention to detail.

2

Observing, Listening, and Questioning

To fully understand your audience, you need to observe them in detail, listen to their concerns and questions, and ask your own questions in a way that uncovers their burning desires, needs, and concerns. What makes them jump for joy? What keeps them up at night?

The goal here is to understand how they think about and respond to the problems that you have the power to solve. Consider:

How to Understand Their Attitudes and Behaviors:

Do you truly understand what drives these people? Take time to evaluate the most common questions they ask on social media, the comments they leave on blog posts by the thought leaders you've identified, and the forums where they gather to discuss these issues together. This research stage will take you a lot of time and should be the focal point of your efforts until you have a keen understanding of how people currently address their issues and how they behave online.

How to Change These Attitudes and Behaviors:

Why spend so much time researching these people? Because the goal is to change their perceptions so that you can provide a product or service that addresses their problems. You can't change someone's mind if you don't truly understand their thought processes first.

Knowing what you know, you can build an action plan that shifts those perceptions, puts you in front of them when they have a question or concern, and deploys at the right time.

01

02



How to Form Connections and Visibility

At this stage, you should know who your prospect is, as well as the problems they have daily, the questions they are asking, and the issues they are raising in their online communities. With this knowledge, you should also know how you can step in to provide a solution that fits their needs.

Now it's time to build visibility online so that you can form new connections with this clearly defined audience. Let's take a moment first to understand what this entails. Many business people will go where they like to be online, not where their prospects like to be. But you can't just dive into Facebook or a vertical-specific forum because that's where you go to discuss what you do. You need to know the schedule of your ideal prospects.

The 24-Hour Clock of Your Ideal Prospect

Most businesses make a crucial mistake when marketing online: they only evaluate the 4 percent of the day when their prospects might be using their product. The average LinkedIn user spends 17 minutes a day on the site. LinkedIn could focus on those 17 minutes and cater to what people do during that time, but they don't. They have created a suite of apps and services that address questions and concerns that their users have in the other 1,400 minutes a day.

So, here's a question for you: What does a 24-hour day look like for your ideal prospect? Where do they spend their time when they wake up, after they get home from work, or in the hours before bed?

Our goal right now is to keenly understand what your prospect does online and when they do it. Not where you think they should go or where you would go if you had the same problem, but where they do go. Ask yourself the following:

01

What are they doing? – What actions does your ideal prospect take in a 24-hour day? Are they married? Do they have kids? Are they a busy professional? A contractor? A stay-at-home parent? Know their day inside and out to identify where you will fit in.

02

What key moments do they have in their day where your business could interact? – Starbucks sells coffee, but most people only drink one or two cups of coffee per day, in the morning. So how did a coffee shop turn into one of the world's largest chains? They looked for key moments during the day when people had a need—breakfast on the way to work, a snack for the kids after school, coffee beans and Christmas gifts for sale on racks. Take a step back from your core service offering and think about not just what you sell, but what you can offer people at different moments during their day.

03

How receptive are they? – Some things are easier to sell than others. Coffee, for example, is a no brainer. More than 90 percent of the population drinks some form of caffeine every day. But what if your product or service is something bigger, more expensive, and more discretionary? How receptive is your target prospect and does that receptiveness change throughout the day?

04

What impact could this have? – Based on that 24-hour day, what kind of impact can you have on your prospect? If you make a piece of software that helps them complete a task in 15 minutes instead of 45 minutes, not only are you saving them time, you are freeing them to do other things. These are moments of impact you should focus on.

This exercise will help you to define the language you should be using to speak with your prospects. What do they think about at 8am when they just got out of the shower and have to get their kids out the door to school? What are they thinking about at 12:15 when they are running late for lunch and know their afternoon is a mess? What do they think about when it's almost time for bed, but they can't turn the computer off? Know your prospect's habits inside and out and you'll be able to get in front of them more often.





Converting Visibility into Sales

At this stage, you're probably wondering "when do I get to make a sale?" It's a common concern—will all this research really translate to sales down the line?

It might not seem like it at first, but what you've just done is to create a detailed map of the customer journey for your business. You've specified what people are doing and when they do it, and how you can get them to think about your solution when it makes the most sense to do so. When you better understand people and how they make decisions, you can plan the activities that will get your products or services in front of them at the right time.

4

How to Map the Customer Journey

Consider again what Starbucks has done:

This is a company that started by offering a consistent cup of coffee at all their locations. Today, Starbucks is far more than just a coffee shop. It is a retail store, a co-working space, a restaurant, and yes, of course, a coffee shop. For many people, though, Starbucks has become an integral part of their daily routine because the company took the time to understand the 24-hour clock of their prospects and build a product that fit more than 4 minutes of that clock.

Yours should do the same. Start by understanding the different stages a potential customer journeys through, as outlined below:



Awareness – Your prospect not only doesn't know you exist, they may not know they have a need you can fill. The vast majority of people in this stage will turn to Google to search for answers to their questions. Content resources on your website are among the most useful tools you can produce so you can be found when these questions are asked.

Consideration – The problem is now known, and the buyer is considering their options. They will look for potential solutions, and you may be one they consider.



Active Evaluation – At this stage, you are a known quantity and are being considered, along with other potential solutions. This is where research is performed to evaluate and compare possible options.



Purchase – At the decision-making stage, prospects will select someone to provide what they need. This is where the details of your product or service matter—onboarding, startup costs, customer support, and testimonials from existing customers.



Retention – It costs five times as much to land a new customer as it does to keep an existing one. Ongoing support, continued thought leadership, and quick communication that builds strong relationships are all invaluable at this stage.



Advocacy – The final step is turning your loyal customers into advocates. These are customers with high net promoter scores who will gladly tell the world about what you do. Encourage it and use their enthusiasm to craft case studies and testimonials that help you succeed further.

Where does your business reside on the consumer journey? Do you fit in a specific spot, or maybe more than one, where you can offer services that help solve problems?



Bonus Resources

This book has been designed to show you how to build a profile that perfectly illustrates your ideal prospects, what they do online, and how you can get in front of them at the right time.

To help you better gather that information and engage with people when they are ready to consider what you offer, here are some useful tools:

The Periodic Table of SEO Success Factors – Want to get found in Google when someone is entering Awareness and Consideration? Learn what matters most with Search Engine Land's periodic table.

SEMrush – Know your competitors and yourself online. How are you ranking in Google, and for what? What are people searching for? What current opportunities can you take advantage of?

Google PageSpeed Insights – Are your visitors finding what they need on your website? Or is it too slow for them to stick around? Check your site for both mobile and desktop in Google's free site speed tool.

Engage with Active Communities – Of course, you will find your audience in places on the web that are unique to their interests and needs. Still, several general interest platforms offer you the opportunity to find and engage with them as a thought leader, provide value, and attract them to your site and services:

Medium – This content syndication platform is more than just a blog: it's a hub for thought leadership on a variety of topics.

Quora – The world's biggest Q&A platform is a great way to get

your name out there and learn about what people are asking about that's related to what you offer.

LinkedIn Groups – There is a professional group for nearly everything on LinkedIn. Join and engage with as many of them as you can.

Build Content for Your Marketing Efforts – It's never been easier for entrepreneurs to build the content they need for a marketing campaign. Here are some of the best resources available:

Canva – Quickly build free graphics for Facebook, Twitter, your blog, and more. Paid plans are inexpensive and offer a ton of useful features.

Designrr – Design and lay out your eBooks and white papers with this easy-to-use online publishing tool.

Venngage – Create infographics using Venngage's pre-built, well-designed templates.

Upwork – Still not sure you want to go it alone? Hire someone who can support your content and design efforts on the world's largest freelancer platform.

Summary

Now that you've devoted some time to thinking deeply about your prospective customers and their online habits, you and your business should now be prepared to start investing money in online marketing. No longer will you blindly be throwing money at different advertising channels and social media sites, hoping that the right people will see what you are offering. Or worse, assuming you know what people want without having invested the time and research to back up your assumptions.

Keep in mind, however, that this isn't the end of the research process. Even the best marketing strategies are educated guesses, where you test a hypothesis about your ideal audience and analyze the results using a large volume of data. You may find that your efforts still fail to connect with your ideal audience or do not perform as well as you expected.

For this reason, it is important to continuously experiment with different target groups. A certain level of flexibility and testing is necessary for good marketing and will help you to better understand what works and what doesn't.

If you take the time to invest in knowing your audience and create a plan that speaks to their needs, though, your business will become successful online.





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The International Association of Women (IAW) is a global in-person and online professional networking platform that provides nearly one million women with the forum, education, and services to thrive in an interconnected world.

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