BEGINNERS GUIDE TO DIGITAL MARKETING

Guide for Businesses Getting Started with Digital Strategy



Welcome

Getting into digital marketing can feel like taking a dive into the unknown for a lot of small business owners, especially if you don't spend all your time online yourself. But relax. Nobody starts at the deep end, nobody has all the answers before they begin and, even better, getting going is probably cheaper and quicker than you might think.

Speaking of budget, there's plenty you can do in the realms of digital marketing without spending a penny – but when it comes to reaching new audiences, that's when a little budget can go a long way. Every part of your digital marketing is a great opportunity to learn something – so it's all about starting small, testing, learning, and growing over time.

In this guide, we're going to take you through the steps to get started – from making the most of search engines to buying your first online ads.

All the channels will be familiar to you – Facebook, Twitter, Google, email and your own website – but we'll give you the steps you need to feel confident you're testing and investing in the way that's right for you and the growth of your business.



What's inside?



What you'll find in this guide has a lot to do with what we call inbound marketing – the tactics you can use to attract, convert, close and delight visitors to your website, social and blog.

Digital platforms are great for this because we now have more ways, places, and routes to attract people to visit our website (where, we hope, they'll become our customers). We can also be much more creative with this kind of marketing – it's not just about what we think of as traditional outbound marketing activity.

It's your website, blog and social media channels that are at the heart of any digital marketing plan – so always keep in mind that you're optimizing for these destinations when planning digital marketing tactics.

We hope this guide gives you what you need to get going, but if you'd like a little more of an in-depth introduction, check out our monthly webinars on YouTube.





Digital Marketing

This is an umbrella term for all of your online marketing efforts. Businesses leverage digital channels such as Google search, social media, email and their websites to connect with their current and prospective customers. From your website to your online assets like digital advertising, email marketing, online brochures and beyond there's a huge spectrum of tactics to consider. The best digital marketers have a clear picture of how each asset supports their overarching goals.

Inbound Marketing

This is about using marketing to bring potential customers to you, rather than having your marketing efforts fight for their attention. Sharing is caring and inbound marketing is about creating and sharing valuable content with the world. By creating content specifically designed to appeal to your dream customers, inbound attracts qualified prospects to your business and keeps them coming back for more.

Content Marketing

This is a marketing tactic that centers on creating, publishing and distributing content for your target audience – usually in the form of blogs or eBooks – the goal of which is to attract new customers.

Buyer's Journey

This is the process buyers go through to become aware of, evaluate and purchase a new product or service. The journey is a 3-step process: Awareness, Consideration and Decision.

What's your strategy?

Simply stated, strategy is thinking about why you're doing something before you do it. Starting your digital marketing strategy is as simple as deciding what you want to do, how you're going to do it, what you expect to happen, and when and how you'll measure your success.

RESULTS: WHAT DO YOU WANT?

- Brand awareness: You want more people to know about your brand,
 and to get your products and services more widely known.
- Lead generation: You want to reach people who've never bought from you before and bring them into your buyer's journey.
- Growth from existing customers: You want people who've already bought from you before to buy more frequently or a different kind of product.

Next, set a **SMART** goal – one with metrics attached to it and a time limit. These might include:

- o **Brand awareness**: % Follower growth on social media within 30 days
- Lead generation: X Number of leads from a piece of downloaded content in 1 month
- Growth from existing customers: % of existing customers buying a secondary product within the year



5 steps to a strategy

STEP 1. SET A MEASURABLE GOAL

As you plan for a new year, quarter, or month, it's time to determine your SMART marketing goals.

SMART is a methodology that helps you establish concrete and achievable goals. SMART stands for: Specific Measurable Attainable Relevant and Timely.

To help you align your digital marketing efforts with SMART goals, we've built this digital marketing SMART goals template that you can download for FREE. It will specifically help you:

- Easily summarize your ultimate digital marketing goals
- Automatically calculate your greatest digital marketing need
- Set a deadline for meeting your annual, quarterly, or monthly goals

Click here to download the template.







BUZZ TIP - WHAT ARE SMART GOALS?

- Specific Your goal needs to be unambiguous and clear.
- Measurable You should define a concrete way of measuring progress towards your goal.
- Attainable It needs to be realistically achievable for your team.
- Relevant Your goal needs to make sense for your business and overall business goals.
- Timely It's important to set a time limit on goals to keep them in check.





STEP 2. KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Now that you know what you want to achieve, you need to figure out who your best prospects will be. If you don't have a clear picture of who you're trying to reach, you'll struggle to deliver a message that's relevant enough to cut through all the other marketing "noise."

The easiest way to do that is to make your own buyer personas – functionalized, general descriptions of your ideal customers. Buyer personas help you understand your customers (and prospective customers) better and make it easier for you to tailor content to the specific needs, behaviors and concerns of different groups.

- Think about who your customers are and group them into 3 or 4 buckets.
- Take each of those groups and create a character from each.
- Give him or her a name, a photo, a personality and a few favorite things.

This work isn't hard, but you want to make sure that you fully understand your ideal customer, and what their pain points are so that you can help them – it's the key to writing great content!





BUZZ TIP – HOW TO CREATE BUYER PERSONAS

Establishing buyer personas for your company helps segment your target audience. Segmentation helps you deliver the right content to the right audience, which generates higher engagement and more leads.

Here is an informational eBook to help you learn more and plan your company's buyer personas. This ebook walks you through the steps you need to efficiently organize your research to create your very own buyer personas.

This eBook includes tips and tricks for:

- Asking the right questions during your persona interviews and surveys
- Formatting your persona research in a compelling way
- Presenting your new, finalized buyer personas to your company
- Using your buyer personas for segmentation, content mapping, and lead nurturing



Click here to download the Persona eBook



STEP 3. KNOW YOUR BRAND

Your brand is how and why your customers choose you over your competitors. You can think of it as your company's personality. So it's something that's worth defining clearly — what do you stand for? What are your strongest character traits? And how does that translate into your presence — from the images you use on your website to the language you use in your emails?

BRAND HEALTHCHECK – DO YOU REALLY KNOW WHAT YOUR BRAND STANDS FOR?

- 1. Who is your customer? Get your personas lined up, visualized and ranked first of all use them to help you answer the following questions.
- 2. What problem do you solve? From your customer's perspective, what challenge are you solving for them? Visualize your perceived value.
- 3. What are your distinctive benefits? List three to five benefits your customer gets from choosing your product/service that customers don't get from going somewhere else.
- 4. What's your brand promise? This is like a pledge. What will you always do for your customers? This is the other key part of your proposition that separates you from the competition.
- 5. **How does it fit together?** Take your answers so far and try to craft a single paragraph that covers them. It's ok if things merge and overlap the aim is to end up with a unique message.
- 6. **Can you make it shorter?** Can you boil down what you stand for into one sentence or tagline?

Now, refine. Take your time, review again and again until you've distilled your value proposition to one clear line that captures everything you want to say.



STEP 4. WATCH YOUR COMPETITION

Your competitors aren't just those who offer a like-for-like product or service. You can think of your competition in 3 ways:

- Direct competitors those brands who offer the same products or services as you
- Indirect competitors brands that may offer different products but compete for the same space or budget as you
- Comparators these might have a similar look and feel as a brand to you, or be other brands that your target customers use frequently too

You want to know what you're up against, and you can learn vicariously from both triumphs and mistakes. Get inspired by your competitors' wins and use your differences to highlight what's unique about what your offering.

NOT SURE HOW TO GATHER INTEL? HERE'S HOW TO GET STARTED:

- Search for a few key terms related to your industry and note where each brand ranks on the results page.
- Try out your competitors buy their products, read their reviews, explore their website and sign up for their newsletter.
- Ask your customers what they think your rivals do well, and what they love about brands in other sectors too.
- Note where and when you see your competitors' ads and screenshot them.
- Follow lots of other brands' social channels.
- Use paid-for online tools like SEMRush for analysis on how well your competitors' sites do in search rankings and web traffic.

FOR MORE INFO, CHECK OUT HUBSPOT'S GUIDE TO COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS.



STEP 5. GET READY TO MEASURE

Digital marketing, like all types of marketing, can be a little nebulous and difficult to attach a dollar amount to. However, there are a few ways to attach a return on investment (ROI) to your digital marketing efforts. We'll show you how to track those numbers so you can have a better feel for how your marketing is important.

MEASURE ROI THROUGH YOUR GOALS

The most important element of any marketing strategy is having a clearly defined goal. It's impossible to track ROI unless you know what you want that return to be. For most digital marketing or inbound campaigns, the goal is going to be landing conversions. For those not versed in marketing speak — a conversion is someone who took a desired action. For an e-commerce business, this is simple — they bought something you told them to. But for other businesses, a conversion could be a variety of things:

- A click to make a phone call
- Downloading an eBook
- Filling out a "contact us" form
- Completing a quote online

The list goes on and on. As a marketer and business owner, you need to decide what is most relevant for your business and what is most relevant for your campaign. Once you have your goal in place, you can attach an ROI to your efforts. You'll want to do decide on what metrics you'll use to measure ROI before you begin your marketing campaign.





BUZZ TIP – HOW TO MEASURE ROI

Let's use an example to illustrate how to track ROI:

Buzz Buzzerson owns a print shop. He knows through market research that his ideal customer is a "Print Project Manager" working at a multi-million dollar organization. Buzz knows that his ideal customer is usually a millennial who has been at their current job for less than a year and wants to be able to make bulk orders easily. Buzz also knows that the best way to reach this demographic is by positioning his company as a knowledgeable resource.

Buzz's marketing team creates a "Print Buying from A-Z" ebook. For Buzz, a successful conversion is a download of the ebook. Buzz knows that if he can then create customers out of 4 of those who download the ebook, he'll break even on the money spent toward marketing. Buzz sends follow-up emails to everyone who downloads the ebook. After a month or so of the campaign, Buzz knows that for every 10 downloads of the ebook, he sees two contacts that respond to his follow up email and are ripe potential customers.

Buzz can track his ROI by how many conversions he sees on the ebook and how many of those contacts become customers. For Buzz, he needs at least **5 new customers as a result of his marketing strategy for a positive ROI**. Based on averages, Buzz will want to see at least **50 conversions (downloads** of the ebook) for a positive ROI.

Still not sure what you should be tracking? Check out our blog on 10 Inbound Marketing Analytics to Watch for the most common Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).



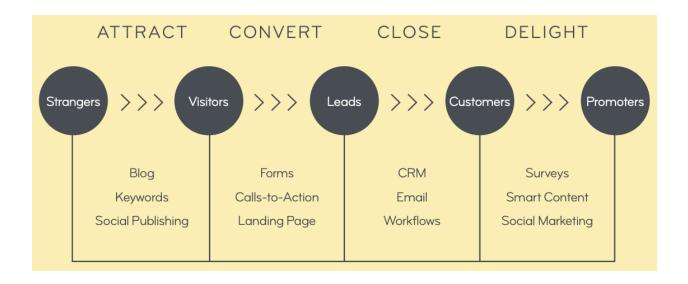
2

Digital techniques

So, you've got your plan. You know who and what you're going after, you know what you're going to measure, and you know what you're trying to achieve. It's time to get going.

The good news is that it's easy to experiment with different ideas to reach your audience on social media, search engines, and your own website. You can try different types and formats of content to find the best results.

The great thing about most digital marketing campaigns is you can begin to track reactions soon after they're launched. That means you can soon work out which campaigns are delivering the best return on investment (ROI) and which techniques are most efficient for your brand.





SEO

Ah SEO...everyone's favorite buzzword that no one *quite* understands. There are literally thousands of articles online about Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and the right and wrong way to SEO (and even some arguing that SEO isn't important at all).

The truth is that Google is ever-evolving and what SEO means is also constantly changing. However, there are a few steps that remain consistent, no matter how much Google changes.

Whether you're using a short keyword or a long tail keyword, there are five key steps to take to make sure your blog and page content is SEO'd properly:

1. Put Keyword in Title

The title of your blog or page is still one of the most important factors that helps Google decide what your content is about. The first step you should take when making sure your content is optimized is to make sure your keyword appears in the title.

2. Put Keyword in URL

The URL isn't as vital for SEO, but it's important that your title match the URL at least somewhat. It doesn't need to be the full title of your blog post or page, but it should at least contain your keyword.

3. Format Correctly

There's a certain art to formatting website content – luckily, it's pretty easy to follow. Google doesn't like sending people to websites that are just walls of text because people don't like reading walls of text. When writing your blogs, always make sure to:

- Use headings to organize content
- Keep paragraphs short (under 5 sentences, generally)
- Make lists (like this one!)



• Use **bold** or *italics* sparingly to highlight key ideas

With that in mind, scroll back up and look through this post. See how it's broken down into short pieces? Make it easy for your readers to skim-read.

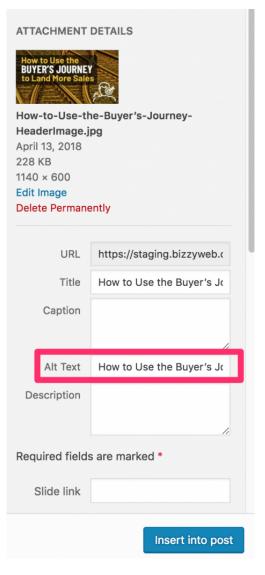
4. Include Alt Attributes in Images

Google is pretty sophisticated, but it can't view images just yet. That's where alt attributes come in – these are little pieces of code that describe what an image is to Google. Alt attributes are easy to add in most website editors. In WordPress, you'll see the option to add an alt attribute when you upload an image.

Try to include your keyword in at least one image's alt attribute.

5. Write Authentically

Traditional SEO advice is to make sure your keyword appears in at least 2-5% of your content. This is generally still true, but not as important as writing authentically. Google has rapidly become sophisticated enough that you no longer need to stick to a strict keyword – it can recognize variations of a keyword. For example, if your keyword is "Hotels Minneapolis" you don't have to repeat that keyword verbatim in your content



– you can use variations like "hotels in Minneapolis" or "staying at a hotel in Minneapolis." Keep your keywords in mind while writing, but it's more important that your content is written with your reader in mind.

Want to know more about SEO? Check out our blog on SEO: Expectations vs Reality so you can better set your own strategy and measure success!





BUZZ TIP – DO AN SEO AUDIT

An SEO audit will give you an idea of how SEO-friendly your website is overall. Here's how you do it:

1. Get a list of your pages

- Export all of your site pages to a spreadsheet, then sort them by the most frequently visited.
- Take your keyword categories and see which fit best by page. Add that category into a column alongside the page name
- Add another column for any keywords you've not currently got covered

2. Add keywords – naturally, of course

This is where your content comes in. You'll need to work in those keywords onto your priority pages in the following areas:

- Titles
- Descriptions
- Headings & Content
- Images Titles & Alt Text
- URLs

3. Learn to avoid search penalties

Don't hide your keywords – or stuff too many of them into your copy. This includes forcing them into places they don't belong to try and rank for terms that don't come naturally to the page you're on at the time.

Keyword stuffing is the oldest trick in the book when it comes to SEO – and nowadays, search engines have been developed specifically to detect it. Not only does it look spammy, but it's not approved by search engines and will result in penalties.



Paid search ads (PPC)



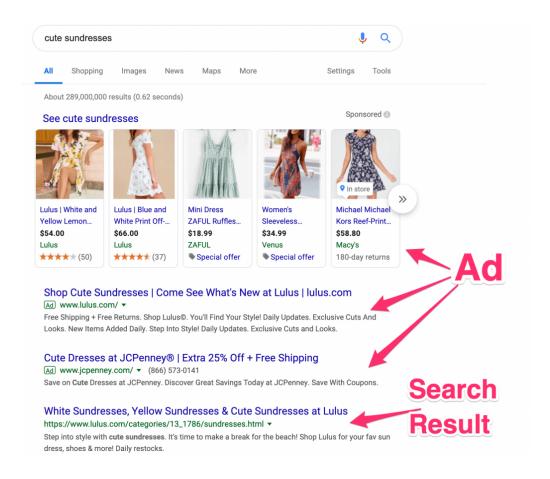
You know your customers are online, but how do you reach them? Online advertising is a fantastic way to reach many people quickly, but where should you advertise online? And which is better: Google or Facebook?

The simple truth is that neither one is "better" than the other, it just depends on your customer, your industry and desired end result.

HOW TO CHOOSE WHERE TO ADVERTISE ONLINE

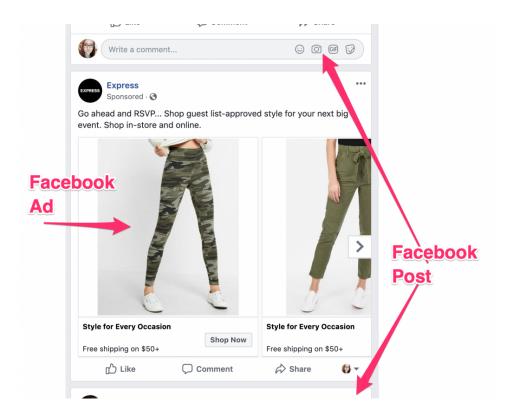
The first step in deciding where to advertise is by looking at your audience personas. Where does your persona spend their time online? Are they active on social media? Do they already know what they're looking for?





Generally speaking, **Google Ads** work best when your audience is in the consideration and decision stages of their buyer's journey – they know what their problem/need is, and they're actively searching online for solutions. In the example above, the person searching on Google *knows* they want to see cute sundresses. They're more likely to click on the ads if they answer the question they have while searching Google.





Meanwhile **Facebook Ads** largely targets those earlier in the buyer's journey in their awareness or consideration stages – they may or may not know what their problem/need is. In the example above, the person browsing Facebook is not actively searching for clothing. However, if they are interested in the clothes or had been searching for clothing online elsewhere before visiting Facebook, they may click on the ad.

Sometimes the best way to figure out which platform is right for you is by diving in headfirst. If you've looked into your persona and goals and are still unsure of where you should advertise, try splitting your budget and running ads on both. Give your ads a few weeks to gain some traction and see what you find – that can help you make an informed decision on where to put your money.





BUZZ TIP – USING GOOGLE ADWORDS

Digital marketers are taking advantage of AdWords, but what does a great PPC campaign even look like? How do you ensure it drives ROI for your company? How do you even do a Google AdWords campaign?

To help you get started the right way, our partners at HubSpot and SEMRush have broken down the basics of how to use paid search in *The Ultimate Google Ads PPC Kit* below.

The kit includes the full ebook, a template, and a checklist -- everything you need to manage keywords, campaigns and ad groups successfully. If you'd like to access the full kit, click on the Download Now button below.





Social media

The direct link between social media and a new customer might not always be as direct as a Google Adwords or media buying campaign. But the return you get from Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other networks can be just as great, if not better than "traditional" marketing channels.

SOCIAL IMPACTS MORE THAN JUST SOCIAL

When you talk about the value of social media, you need to consider the value it brings to other aspects of your company as well. The problem is some marketers aren't sure how or where to start when it comes to proving the value of social. We think we can help with that.

First, you need to define your goals. What do you want to accomplish on social? Below are just a few examples:

- Get more traffic
- Build awareness
- Capture leads or sales
- Retain and serve current customers

Your goals may be a combination of these, or some we haven't mentioned, and that's fine too. The point is, social media ROI will look different depending on what you're trying to accomplish.



GET MORE TRAFFIC

Social continues to prove it's one of the most valuable traffic generators. Plus, one of the biggest advantages of driving traffic from social as opposed to other sources is the branding and awareness benefits you get along with it. Share links back to your website on social media to drive traffic back to your brand.

BUILD AWARENESS

Social media is an excellent way to build awareness for your brand. People don't just want to buy from companies because they have good products and services. They want to know what your brand stands for in addition to what it sells. According to *The Nielson Report*, **66% of consumers are willing to pay more for products and services from companies dedicated to social and environmental good**.

Use social media to let people peek behind the curtain to understand more about your company, your culture and what you stand for. It doesn't have to be a social cause, but people want to know who they're buying from.

DRIVE LEADS OR SALES

We talked about how beneficial social media can be for driving traffic to your website. But once people arrive, the value starts to kick in even more because social media followers aren't afraid to buy. In fact, Sprout Social's Q3 2016 Index report found that 57% of users are more likely to buy from a brand they follow on social media.

Start focusing on building a highly engaged audience on social media first, and profits are more likely to follow.



RETAIN CURRENT CUSTOMERS

Your customers are constantly Tweeting about experiences they've had with your business and posting photos on Instagram with their favorite products. Sprout Social's Q2 2016 Index found that social media was consumers' No. 1 choice for seeking customer service. That's right—your customers are using social media to talk directly to you, to resolve problems and create great experiences. That makes social the perfect platform to not only gain customers, but to retain existing customers.

The value of social media doesn't have to be an elusive mystery your brand struggles to solve. Shift the way you think about how social benefits your company from a transactional viewpoint to more relational. You'll get a much clearer picture of what social media ROI means to your brand and how to measure it.





BUZZ TIP –ANATOMY OF A GOOD SOCIAL POST

What is it about some social posts that make us stop scrolling and interact? We've noticed a few things most "successful" posts have in common, and we've broken them apart to see how they are built. For our purposes, we define a "successful" post as one that:

- Has reached at least 20% of your page's followers
- Has received 5% engagement compared to total reach
- Was shared by multiple users

So what do they have in common?

- **1. Short, snappy descriptions**: When it comes to social media, less is more. A common mistake is throwing everything but the kitchen sink into a post. Don't overthink what you post often, just a short sentence and captivating image is enough to reach people.
- 2. Showcases company culture: If someone follows your company on social media, they're invested enough to want more information.

 Show them what makes you unique!
- **3. Invitation to interact**: Social media thrives on engagement, but not many posts actively encourage responses. Adding a simple question invites your audience to participate.
- **4. Relevant information**: Every post should provide value in some way. You should already be blogging share it on your social channels!



Email marketing

In the process of growing your business, winning new customers is as important as nurturing the relationships with customers you already have. Stay in touch with your loyal followers with emails that go beyond announcement of new products.

Instead, build connections with:

- Newsletters increase brand awareness and drive traffic with what's new on your site
- Seasonal emails stay on your customers' radar with Christmas or birthday emails
- Exclusive offers make loyal customers feel special with the odd discount or gift
- Reminders if a subscription is ending, drop a friendly email
- Flash announcements boost sales with flash discounts, like a 48-hour sale

GETTING STARTED

- Collecting email subscribers depends on the optimization of your digital marketing efforts: make sure your blog, social media and paid campaigns are driving to a landing page that's optimized for conversion to collect lead information.
- There are dozens of easy-to-use email services (like <u>HubSpot</u>) that let you design emails, manage your address list and track analytics such as the number of opens and click-throughs.
- Less is more. Figure out a clear objective for every email you send to promote your new line of soaps, remind customers you exist, get them to download your app?
- Test, test: What types of subject line words result in the highest number of opens? Where are your readers clicking?





BUZZ TIP -EMAILS THAT DEMAND ATTENTION

With the vast amount of emails we all receive daily, it's important to create eyeball-worthy emails that command attention. Here are our top design tips to capture your reader's attention:

- 1. Make it scannable: your email needs to be as digestible as possible so readers don't immediately click away. Follow best practice guidelines from top to bottom, including:
 - Your Logo
 - Header
 - Body Text (with images)
 - Section dividers
 - Footer
 - CAN-SPAM/GDPR Compliance
- **2.** Mobile first: emails are now opened more on mobile than desktop. Generally speaking, you'll want to stick to one or two-row layouts for mobile optimization.
- **3.** Use images (carefully): Images make your emails more visually appealing, but like anything too much of a good thing can cause problems. Try to stick to 3-7 images maximum in an email newsletter.
- **4.** Utilize color to inspire action: Choose the colors that match your brand while also conveying a mood. Stick to only a few colors for a clean look. When choosing colors, designate one color to use for all your calls-to-action. This color should only be used on your buttons and/or links so they pop and attract attention.



Ready to go

Bearing in mind what we said about the importance of keeping things simple and light-touch when you're starting out, don't be afraid to use a combination of marketing techniques and ideas. It's useful to think of your marketing activity as an ecosystem - when all your tactics (online or offline) work together, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

You might not always get it right every time, but if you keep a keen eye on the performance of your activity it's possible to minimize your risk, since you can more or less switch your tactics on and off at will. And, while it's obviously important to focus your attention on what's working, as you start to gain confidence in digital marketing, and your strategy starts to pay dividends, let yourself have some fun and experiment with different tactics too.

Good luck!

Ready to Get Started with Digital Marketing? Contact Trygve to see how you can ramp up your success.



Trygve Olsen
Director, Buzz Development
BizzyWeb

m: 651.252.4052

e: trygve@bizzyweb.com

Get Your Digital Strategy

