



# The Ultimate Digital Marketing Playbook



The importance of having a strong digital marketing strategy should never be underestimated. With how quickly the world is transforming, businesses are required to continue to reinvent their marketing strategies to stay current. Companies that focus on traditional advertising channels, such as TV or print, miss out on online connections and marketing. The age of the internet requires additional marketing strategies to replace supplement those that have always been used, depending on your business.

A successful digital marketing strategy will attract potential clients via methods such as search engine optimization (“SEO”), engage with them, capture their attention, nurture the relationship, and finally, convert them into a client. Each step of this process requires sophisticated strategies that can be overwhelming at first. However, gaining knowledge and professional assistance make it significantly more straightforward to increase conversions and grow the client base, regardless of the size of the business.



# The Importance of Digital Marketing

Digital marketing is essential, as it allows you to maximize the reach to your target audience. A large portion of the population spends a lot of their time online. By harnessing digital marketing, you will have an opportunity to reach a much larger audience.

Even if your target demographic is a group that spends less time online, such as older generations, an increasing number of them still go online enough to make your advertising efforts worth it. Additionally, digital advertising lets you expand your reach and potential client base, allowing for potential growth into other demographics.

The use of digital continued to increase around the globe. The following are a few useful stats about 2020 digital marketing trends:



> Almost 4.57 billion people were active internet users. (statista)

> Mobile web traffic has consistently accounted for about half of all global web traffic since the beginning of 2017. (statista)

> Almost 25% of companies invest in mobile optimization as a top SEO tactic. (Hubspot)

> 49% of users say they use Google to discover or find a new item or product. (Hubspot)

> Over a two year period, there was a 900%+ growth in mobile search for “\_\_near me today/tonight”. (Hubspot)

> 84% of people with access to the internet use social media. (Hootsuite)

> On average, people spent 2 hours and 24 minutes on social media every day. (Globalwebindex)

> 43% of internet users use social media for work purposes. (Hootsuite)

> 43% of internet users use social media when researching things to buy. (Globalwebindex)

> Nearly 40% of marketers say content marketing is a very important part of their overall marketing strategy. (Hubspot)

> Companies spend 46% of their budget on content creation. (Hubspot)

> Search is the number one traffic source to blogs across all industries. (SEMrush)

# The Digital Marketing Funnel: An Overview

There are some slight variations between a traditional sales or marketing funnel and one for digital marketing. As such, businesses must be aware of the digital marketing funnel when creating their strategy.

The funnel features the following five main stages when viewed from the perspective of the business:



**1. Attract:** Attract attention to your company via social media, blogs, backlinks, and SEO strategies.



**2. Engage:** Engage with the people you attracted by providing value, addressing a pain point, or via a similar action.



**3. Capture:** Capture the relevant information for potential clients (i.e. leads) at the time of engagement. This prevents them from forgetting about your company by providing you a means of contact. Typically, you ask for an email address, along with permission to contact it.



**4. Nurture:** Build a stronger relationship with the person. Do this by continuing to add value to the relationship via educational or fun content, or maybe a newsletter.



**5. Convert:** Ask the person to do something small, such as try a product or free sample or book a consultation, depending on the type of business you run. This should be a small ask and the first interaction in the funnel that calls for something other than their time or email address.



To better understand the requirements of your potential clients, you can also look at the funnel from their perspective, which includes the following steps:



**1. Awareness:** The target audience member realizes that they could benefit from your product or service but may still be unaware of your company. In this stage, they look online for information regarding the product or service in general. At this point, they do not want to be met with sales pitches but with information.



**2. Assessment:** At this stage, the person has begun focusing their research on your type of product or service. They are likely aware of your business and have probably engaged in some way, such as reading a blog, signing up for a newsletter, or following you on social media.



**3. Decision:** The person begins deliberating whether to work with you or a competitor. At this stage, you must convert them by showing why your product or service is the best.



# Developing a Digital Marketing Strategy: The First Steps



A few important steps must be done before you can get anywhere in the development of your digital marketing strategy. These are essential for planning, as they let you tailor your strategy to your specific goals and audience.

## Know the Target Audience

Start by taking the time to determine your target audience — and do so in great detail. Understanding the target audience is essential. Different types of advertisements will appeal to different segments of the population, so targeting lets you better focus your digital marketing efforts.

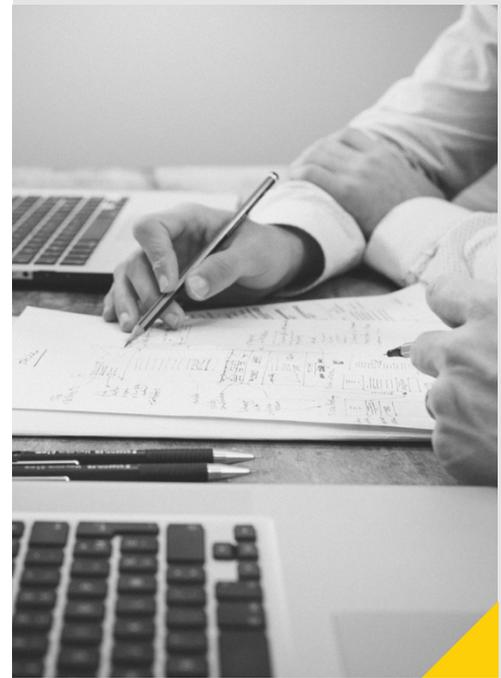
Ideally, you will create one or more customer personas, which describe the age, gender, location, hobbies, goals, and pain points of your potential customers. If you need to create multiple personas to cover your full target audience, do so.

These personas will serve as your guide when crafting your advertising, from keyword selection for SEO to the information to display in digital ads. Think of these personas as your method of fully understanding your potential customers and how they can benefit from your product or service.

## Create Goals

Just like any other type of advertising strategy, your digital marketing plan needs to have clear objectives that you are working toward. Having clearly defined goals not only gives you a path to focus on but also helps you measure the success of your campaign.

Look for concrete goals that can be measured, such as the number of likes or follows on social media, website traffic, people who sign up for your email list, new sales, introductory meetings, or another metric that applies to your business.



## Select the Channels

Next, go back to your personas and think about what online channels your target audience frequents. This will help you determine which channels to focus on for your digital advertising efforts. While you ideally would be able to execute a digital marketing campaign across all channels, this would spread your resources too thin. Instead, focus on a few at first, then expand your efforts in the future.

Some channels to consider include your blog, your website, social media pages, email, YouTube, TikTok, and podcasts.

## Make the Plan – With a Timeline

Once you have created personas and chosen goals and channels, it is time to create a plan of some sort. At the very least, choose how frequently you will post content. The key here is consistency, whether that is weekly, monthly, or daily. When you are consistent, those you engage with develop trust in you, and you set expectations.

Because of this, you should be realistic with the content schedule. It is better to share content every other week consistently than to claim you will do so weekly but only share content three weeks in a row before taking the next week off. Remember that the content is how you build your relationship with potential customers, the nurture step of the funnel.



# How to Attract the Target Audience

Most businesses initially focus their digital marketing efforts on attracting the target audience since it is impossible to continue along the digital marketing funnel without completing the first step. Much of the efforts for this part of your strategy will focus on bringing traffic to your website via strategies like SEO and a blog.

## Search Engine Optimization

Perhaps the most important part of your strategy for attracting your audience is SEO. Appearing higher in search engine rankings will provide long-term results and does not require any paid advertisements. Because of this, even companies that do not have large marketing budgets will allocate enough to SEO. Companies that need to be extremely budget conscious and have an almost nonexistent marketing budget will even set up the website in a way that prepares it for future SEO investments.

Search engine optimization is exactly what it sounds like, a method of optimizing your website and brand so that it appears higher up in the search engine rankings. This process involves some knowledge of Google's algorithms and how to take advantage of them. SEO strategies typically feature several key components, including keywords and backlinks.

## Keywords

Keywords are among the most important SEO strategies. This involves determining which words and phrases your audience is most likely to search for. From there, you insert them into the content that you create, from headings to text on pages to image titles and URLs. When using keywords, it is important to avoid overstuffing them. Search engines have become highly sophisticated, and sites that overstuff keywords are now likely to be viewed as spam instead of quality content. Instead, create content that incorporates keywords naturally.

## Backlinks

Backlinks are another method of enhancing your search engine rankings. Once again, these should be done naturally or organically. In the past, it was common for websites and companies to simply list each other's links on their pages, but search engine algorithms no longer reward links without context or long lists of links.

Instead, take the same approach you do with keywords and aim to create backlinks naturally. One common method of this is writing guest blogs for related websites with links back to your website at the end or potentially within them. Another common method is answering questions on forums and including a link to your page.

## Consider Hiring an SEO Professional

It is theoretically possible to follow an SEO strategy yourself, but this is unwise for most businesses. You will not be familiar with the ever-changing algorithms used by Google and other search engines and will not know other best practices. SEO can also be incredibly time-consuming, with both researching potential keywords and creating content requiring a great deal of effort.





## Pay-Per-Click Advertising

SEO can be used with or without pay-per-click advertising (“PPC”). This is the advertising strategy where you pay to rank highly for a certain keyword. When you use PPC, your link appears at the top of the search results with a label as an “ad” or something similar.

Pay per click lets you start attracting visitors to your website right away, but it can also be costly. This is particularly true of the most competitive keywords, which are sometimes financially unattainable for small to medium businesses.

## Make a Quality Blog

Creating a blog serves multiple purposes when working to attract your target audience. It is an excellent way to work on your SEO strategy, as blogs provide a convenient opportunity to insert keywords onto your website. Blogs also give your website regular updates, which further enhances its search engine ranking.

Additionally, a well-curated blog will help you gain the attention of potential customers, as they will read your blog posts to learn more about your type of products or services.

Yet another important aspect of a blog is its ability to position your business as an expert. Posting useful, informative articles on the blog will show visitors that your business knows the ins and outs of your industry, something that does wonders in terms of building a relationship. At the same time, a blog provides other opportunities for engagement, such as via comments.

## Use Social Media to Your Advantage

To further boost traffic to your website, as well as increase awareness of your brand, you should also harness the power of social media. Eventually, you will want to cultivate a presence on most major social media networks, but it is best to start with just two or three, as building a presence takes time and effort.

Be sure to promote your blogs on social media as a way to create backlinks and drive clicks. You should also use social media to drive engagement and brand awareness. Make posts or comments about relevant events and facts.

When choosing which social media sites to focus your efforts on, go back to the client personas you created. If your target audience is professionals, LinkedIn may be a good idea. If you sell a product that lends itself well to images, consider Instagram. Other platforms that are worth considering include Twitter and Facebook. Do not underestimate the importance of social media in your digital advertising, as 84% of the global population with access to the internet used social media in 2020.



# How to Engage with the Target Audience

Going back to the digital marketing funnel, the next step is to engage with your target audience, which you should be well on your way toward doing thanks to your efforts in attracting them. During this part of the funnel, your goal is to give the audience a reason to engage with you; there should absolutely be no selling.

Creating various types of content is a straightforward method of engaging with your audience, as are direct interactions on your various channels.

## Conversations on Social Media or In Blog Comments

Use the content and social media pages you have created to attract audience and use those assets to generate engagements through conversations. Be readily available on social media, offering timely responses to any client or potential client that sends you a message, whether a private message or a public one, such as a tweet.

You can take this a step further if you have the resources available and reach out on social media, as well. Actively look for trending topics that are relative to your industry and weigh in with your expertise or perspective. Remember not to incorporate a sales pitch at this point.

## Via Blog Posts

In addition to responding to the comments on blogs, the blog posts themselves are an opportunity to engage with your target audience. This is a natural continuation of the blog strategy for attracting the audience. Focus on providing useful information that people are searching for. You will provide them with value while showcasing your expertise.

## Via Infographics

Do not just share relevant information via blog posts. If you come across a topic that lends itself well to an infographic, create one. Infographics visually present data and can be another compelling method of engaging with your audience. This will be even more effective if you can create a truly valuable infographic that other websites choose to share. Remember to share your infographics on social media as well as your blog.

## Via Videos

You can also share similar content in the format of videos. Many people prefer information presented in videos since they can receive visual and audio information. There will also be certain situations in which your audience will find it easier to watch a video than read a blog post, such as while eating dinner, exercising, or working on a craft or home improvement project.

## Via Other Relevant Formats

Think about your industry and the customer personas you created, and brainstorm other methods of engagement that can appeal to your target audience. Depending on your industry, an e-book or a whitepaper may be another great idea. These types of documents are particularly useful at setting your brand up as an expert.



# How to Capture the Target Audience (or Their Contact Information)



Bringing your target audience to your website requires a significant amount of effort, and you want to avoid starting from scratch and having to repeat that effort. By capturing contact information, you will have a method of reaching out to these visitors in the future, so you can nurture your relationship with them.

During this stage, your goal is also to continue capturing the attention and interest of your audience, so they are interested in building that relationship. There are several methods of achieving this goal.

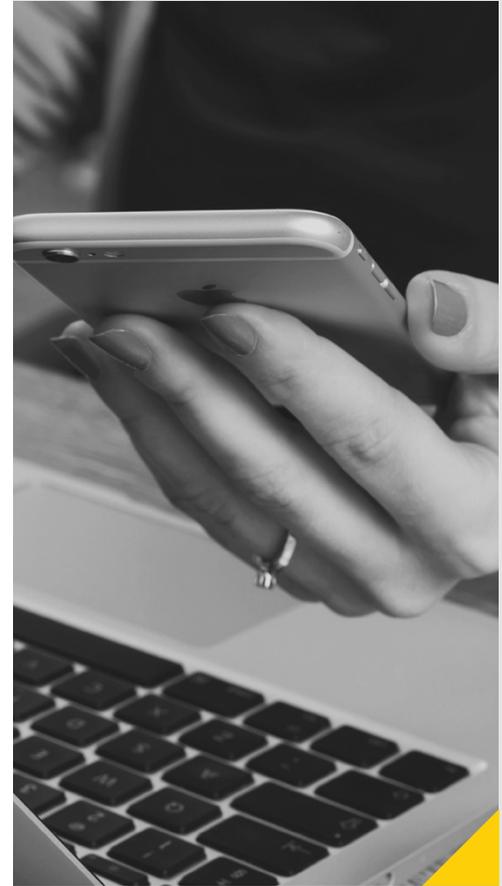
## Landing Pages

Savvy businesses create landing pages on their website. These are the pages where visitors “land” from another website or a Google search. Because of the latter, they are frequently the target of your SEO strategy and feature crucial keywords. The goal of a landing page is to capture essential information while also bringing the audience to your website.

Landing features should always feature a call to action (“CTA”), which gives visitors a concrete action to take. When working toward capturing your audience, that action is usually filling out a form to provide their email address and sign up for an email list. Embedded forms are particularly useful for this.

## Include CTAs on Blogs

To expand your reach, include these calls to actions on your blog posts, as well. A sentence or two at the end of a post, along with a contact form or request to click a link to share your email address, can do wonders for expanding your email list.



## Offer Something

Most people are hesitant about receiving spam or excessive emails when they share their email address. As such, you will want to offer an incentive of some sort in exchange for their email address.

The type of offer you make will depend on your business. If you sell a service, your offer may be a free consultation call. If you sell a product, it may be a small free product or a discount code. Depending on your industry, the offer can also be educational content, such as a guide, e-book, or exclusive video series.

To figure out what to offer, go back to your client persona. Think about what would offer the most value to them and is realistic for you to offer.



# How to Nurture Your Relationship with the Target Audience



Once you have the audience's email address, you have yet another method of engagement and building a relationship at your disposal. Emails can be easily personalized via segmented email marketing campaigns or the ability to insert a name with automation. You can use emails for newsletters, offers, and more. Remember that the goal here is to enhance your relationship with the target audience while also starting to show them why you are the best choice.

## Use Automated Emails

Technology allows you to take advantage of automated emails to take away the stress of timing from your email marketing campaign. You can craft your emails weeks in advance and schedule them to send on a specific day and time. This not only saves you time but also ensures you provide consistency with emails, further building trust in your brand.

You can also use automation for welcome emails. Craft a welcome email that everyone who signs up receives automatically. This email should include a friendly welcome message and thank them for signing up. It should also remind them of the benefits of being on your mailing list. Of course, it will also include a method of obtaining the offer you made to encourage sign-ups. For example, it could be a discount code or a link to an e-book download, if that is what you offered.

## Personalize Emails

Something as small as addressing an email to the recipient's first name can have a significant impact on their perception of your company, helping build that personal connection. You can ask for first names on the same form you collect the email addresses.



## Make Emails Feel Personal

As you write the emails, draft them in such a way that they feel like a personal message. This includes writing as if you are just talking to one person, not hundreds of them. You can also make them feel more personal by asking questions or encouraging recipients to reply with any questions or doubts they have.

## Keep Emails Plain Text

It can be tempting to include multiple images or fancier designs in emails, but resist this urge. Research indicates that you will achieve more conversions if you stick to plain text emails. This also reduces the email failing to load properly on some mobile devices.





## **Stick to a Schedule**

As with blog posts, you want to use emails to show your audience that you are consistent. As such, you should choose a schedule and stick to it. Whether that is monthly emails, weekly ones, or another schedule, the key is consistency.

## **Segmented Email Marketing**

The goal of emails at this point is to nurture the connection that your audience feels with you. One of the best ways to do this is to customize the content of emails depending on what they are looking for or their demographics.

Go back to your customer personas and consider making slight variations in your email templates to better appeal to each one. Of course, to effectively use this strategy, you will need to know which persona each contact fits into. You can do this in several ways, but the easiest is to directly ask them. For example, when someone submits their email address, you could have them check a list of their interests. Or, you could ask them to do so in the welcome email.

This helps ensure you do not overwhelm your audience with emails that they find irrelevant while also maximizing the value they get from your emails.

## **Include a Call to Action**

At this stage, you can start pushing your leads to convert, so a call to action can be appropriate. Just place a single one in the email, so you do not overwhelm the recipient or seem too pushy. You also do not need to include the call to action in every email. The primary goal is still to add value and nurture your relationship, with conversions being a secondary goal.



# How to Convert the Target Audience

At this point in your digital marketing strategy, your lead should understand your company, have a relationship with your company, and view you as an authority in your industry. Conversion should occur naturally when you follow all of the above steps. At some point, the emails or other interactions with them will be the final push they need to make a purchase or book a service.

Remember that to qualify as a conversion, the lead officially becomes a prospective client or a client. If you sell goods, this is straightforward, as it will be when they make a purchase. If you offer a service of some sort, it may be less straightforward. In these cases, the conversion may be when they sign up for a free trial, book a consultation, or make a phone call to discuss your services in greater detail.

Now that you have successfully converted your lead into a prospective client, you are ready to transition to your sales funnel.

## Evaluate Your Strategy

As this is the final stage of the digital marketing funnel, it is also the ideal time to evaluate your marketing strategy. Go back to the goals that you originally set up and see whether you reached them. From there, you can decide whether your strategy requires adjustments or is fine as is.

Analytics will be a particularly useful tool for this, even basic analytics from free sources. Website analytics can help show you what type of visitors you have not converted and which of your landing pages or blogs have led to the most leads and conversions. This information can then be used to focus your efforts on the areas that produce the most results.





# Putting This Playbook to Good Use

As you develop and implement your digital marketing strategy, be sure to use all of the resources at your disposal, including outsourcing if your team is spread too thin or is not experienced enough in digital marketing.

Your primary goal throughout most stages of digital marketing is to build up a strong relationship with your audience and encourage them to view you as an expert source within your industry. Methods such as SEO and creating a quality blog can attract your audience, provide value, and showcase expertise. Focus on sharing useful content, and you will be on your way to meeting the rest of these goals.

You do not need to attempt to navigate digital marketing on your own. Schedule a consultation with us today to begin your digital marketing journey and watch your company grow!

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