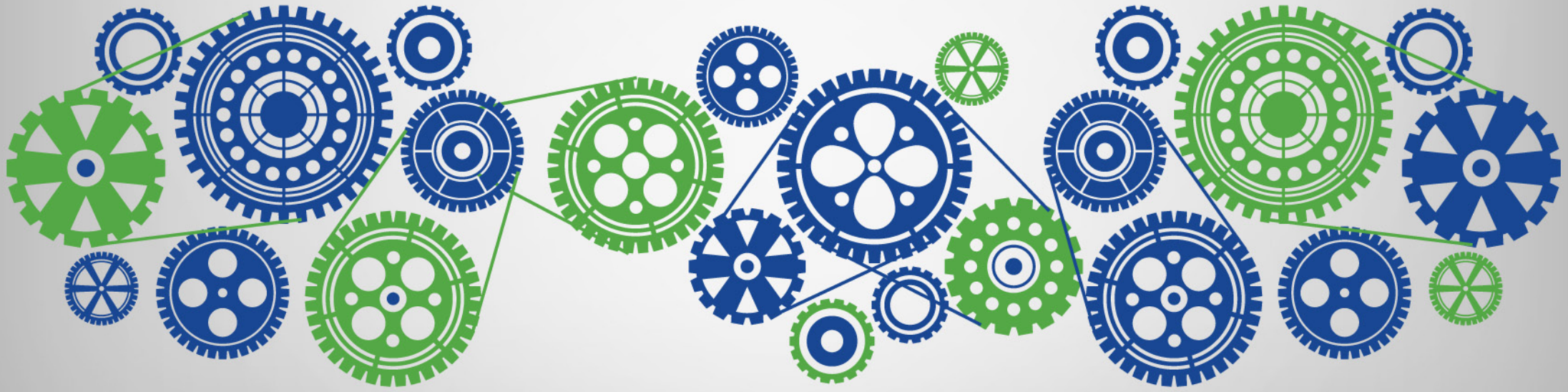
Building Your Digital Marketing Machine



BY KEVIN LAYTON, CEO, DATA-DYNAMIX

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PREFACE

We are inundated daily with hundreds of pieces of online information featuring products and services that promise to change our lives. But in reality most of what flashes across our screens goes by in a blur — unnoticed and lacking impact. For a company to emerge from that blur and engage our attention, they must inspire us, involve us, and offer us something of meaningful value. To break out of the blur zone, a business must be seen as a working solution to a worrisome problem — even a seemingly small one.

Consider Coca-Cola. For decades they have done a great job of convincing consumers that they can solve their problem of thirst by using a consistent message in their traditional and digital marketing. But for many businesses with considerably less budget (and branding experience), finding a way to get their message out and then stay on message can be more challenging.

The Digital Marketing Machine was written as an ally in helping you master the digital marketing space and create consistent campaigns — regardless of the size of your budget. We'll start with the basics, and then delve into the nuances of digital marketing, offering plenty of tips and insider perspective along the way. Prepare to explore the foundations of a digital presence, identify proper channels for establishing that presence, make sure your messages stay front and center, and analyze return on investment.

We've been in the trenches and seen it all, and we can't wait to share it with you.

INTRODUCTION

Any machine — simple or complex, manual or electronic — is a tool containing one or more parts that use energy to perform an intended action. Machines are designed to make our lives easier, and with each improvement in technology, easier even still. For example: Hundreds of years went by with farmers using wooden plows and cattle to get their fields ready for planting. Then came the invention of the engine and along with it the tractor, and almost overnight, the field preparation process was transformed.

Consider your average day. You most likely use a machine to make your morning cup of coffee, a machine (car, subway, bike) to get to work, and a machine to read and respond to email. We use machines all day long to help make life easier and more efficient. Isn't it time to turn your marketing efforts into a machine that can make it easier and more efficient to build your business?

Imagine a world where your marketing says what you want it to say, sends tailored messages and ads to the exact people who want to see them, and drives sales and engagement without you personally having to interact with the customer at each point in the process. You don't have to just imagine a world like this; it can be a reality for your business. How do you become this type of successful digital marketer?

At Data-Dynamix, we're your partner and coach in guiding you in what it will take to set up and manage your own digital marketing machine.

PART I:

CREATE THE FOUNDATION FOR YOUR DIGITAL MARKETING MACHINE

If you have ever bought and brought home one of those do-it-yourself pieces of furniture, you know that the box always states, "Some assembly is required." Your digital marketing machine is no different. There are a whole variety of parts that a business must have in place in order to be successful at digital marketing, and these parts need to work together as a whole. As you begin to build your digital marketing machine, consider the following pieces:

CONSISTENT BRANDING

Before you embark on the journey of digital marketing, you'll need a clear vision for your brand both visually (fonts, colors, imagery) and in the language you use to tell your story. Branding isn't just a description of who you are and what you offer; it involves a consistent tone, feel, look, and message in everything your company puts out including your website, business cards, social media pages, eBooks, and ads.

Do this part of the process right, and your audience will learn to recognize you by the consistent brand message (in words and pictures) that you tell. For instance, whenever you see those two golden arches rising up from the road, you know that French fries and hamburgers are just around the corner. This brand has stayed so consistent over the years that you know exactly who I'm talking about without my ever having to mention their name.

CLEARLY DEFINED AUDIENCE

Once you know who YOU are, it's time to make sure you understand who your audience is. Many businesses fail to do the research necessary to clarify the demographic and psycho-demographic details of their ideal customers. As a result they struggle in making the most of their digital marketing strategy and end up missing the mark and telling thousands about their product when only a few are interested and listening. It's often a classic case of trying to be "all things to all people" instead of honing in on the key customer groups and crafting messages that make sense to those audiences.

At Data-Dynamix, we understand the power of a well-defined audience, the power that comes from a brand that talks directly to the exact people who are interested in its goods or services.

WELL-DESIGNED WEBSITE

When it comes to marketing a business in the digital age, your website is at the heart of your marketing tool kit and is often the first interface a client, potential prospect, investor, vendor, etc., has with your company. The pressure to build a website right the first time — one that is easy to find and use — is daunting for many businesses, regardless of their size. Here's our guideline for five ways to do it right from the start.

1. SET YOUR SITE PRIORITIES

One of the first pitfalls to avoid when creating your company's website is beginning without a firm idea of what you hope to accomplish. Before you build, take the time to decide what information you want to share, with whom, and what immediate actions you want visitors to take when they come to your site. Do you want your website to serve simply as a static marketing brochure? An information hub? A marketing machine that drives traffic and converts to sales? We are solidly in favor of the latter.

The answers to these questions will help you determine both the types of content (audio, video, written) and topics your site should feature. Having an outline of your content well thought out ahead of time makes your Web developer's job easier, saves you money, and results in an overall better experience for the end user.

For example, many companies assume they need to have a tab for their executive team in their main navigation menu. While having a bio page for your executive team is important, it does not always need to live at the top of the navigation bar. Depending on the number of executives you have, how long their bios are, and how big your company is, you may opt to have them listed as a drop-down menu from another tab. You may decide to have short bios of each executive all on one page, or you may have a master page that links each person's name to an individual bio page, etc. There is always a multitude of ways to organize content on a website — and there is no one right way. Thinking this all through before you build is a crucial part of creating a website that will play a key role in your digital marketing machine.

2. MAKE A SITE NAVIGATION PLAN

Information architecture refers to the way your website is organized to allow users to find what they are looking for. Ideally it should be based on your priorities and goals for your website and the typical information your customers are looking for. For example:

- **Make your contact information easy to find**. You don't want a potential client having to scroll through a ton of content or dig into deep layers of your site to find your phone number. Keep your contact information top of page, and make it clickable on desktops, laptops, and smart phones. Don't make viewers cut and paste your phone number into their phones while driving.
- **Showcase your offerings**. Customers who land on your site need to be able to immediately discern what you have to offer them

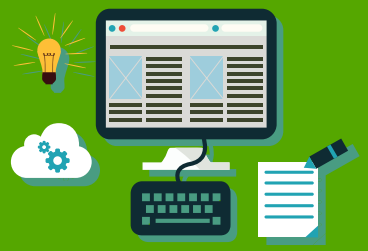
specifically. Obvious calls to action (CTAs) make it easy to lead potential customers into your "funnel," where you can eventually convert them to paying clients.

- **Make it easy to buy from you**. If you're selling products online, make them easy to locate and pay for — regardless of the device being used. As obvious as this may sound, purchasing products on some websites is akin to a treasure hunt — without a map. Up-to-date inventory, customer-friendly cart checkout, and other convenient, appealing features are a priority.

Too often the information architecture of a website becomes overly complicated as a company tries to please the multiple audiences it caters to including: existing clients, potential customers, job seekers, investors, and advertisers. It's a best practice to prioritize these audiences so that your information architecture is primarily aimed at satisfying your most important audience — usually the one that results in sales leads.

The easiest way to map out your information architecture is to get it down on paper before presenting it to your Web developer. Alternatively you can ask your Web developer to create a "wireframe." This is an online visual outline (less the color and design elements) of what your website architecture will look like and includes the basic structure of all page types. The design of your site is then built around that wireframe. Many Web developers can help you refine your site architecture and make recommendations based on their previous experience. Likewise a usability, content, branding, or marketing expert can contribute best practices for organizing information in a user-friendly way.

One word of caution: Just because your competitors are doing their websites a certain way does not mean that you have to follow suit. It's good practice to be aware of what your competitors are doing online, but don't be afraid to do it your way — if that works better for your business. That's not to say that you need to build the Taj Mahal of websites, either. If you run a small, local brick-and-mortar shop and just need to have a basic Web presence, then a "brochure" site — one with just a few landing pages — might just do the trick.



BOTTOM LINE .....

Creating a website is a process. When you and the Web developer are aligned on the goals of your site, the content, and the information architecture, you end up with a website that lays the foundation for your digital marketing machine.

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3. PLAN FOR WEBSITE MAINTENANCE & UPDATES

Every company, large or small, has a limited budget for their website build. Knowing yours allows you to set a realistic scope for what your website can achieve. The amount budgeted will help guide you in choosing what type of website you want to build. The multitude of site options includes: a WordPress template site, an unbranded Google site, or a highly customized, built-from-scratch site.

With your website up and running, it's tempting to sit back, breathe a sigh of relief, and move on to the next item on your marketing list. A classic mistake in building a digital marketing machine is creating a website and then forgetting about it. A static site that does not grow and change won't help you attract or close new business. Regardless of which platform you decide to build on, you will need a plan for how to maintain and update your site over time.

Remember, your website maintenance is not limited to technical and design updates. Once you've got your website up and running, you'll need to make a detailed plan for the continual creation of new and fresh content as well.

4. MAKE YOUR SITE TECH-FRIENDLY

That having been said, if you're taking the time to read this eBook, a simple brochure site is probably not what you're after. To be a solid foundation for your digital marketing machine, your site must meet certain technical requirements including:

- Display well on all major devices including smart phones, tablets, and laptop and desktop computers.
- Be search-engine friendly.
- Play nice with Google by validating your website with the search engine and being registered with Google Maps when appropriate.

Potential customers often search for local businesses directly on Google Maps. By validating with Google that you own your business — claiming it — you can control your Google listing and the way it shows up on Google Maps, including a correct address and phone number.

5. FIND THE RIGHT SITE BUILDER

As you work your way through the process of planning out your website, you'll more than likely be looking at Web design firms as well. Finding the right company to turn your vision into a reality can be a daunting process. Web designers seem to have sprung up everywhere these days, with a wide mix of backgrounds and range of qualifications.

Graphic designers, marketing professionals, software developers, and more have hung out a shingle and opened shop. Which type of design firm you should choose varies depending on your needs, objectives, and budget. If you want to build a simple brochure-style website with few bells and whistles, you could be well served by a great graphic designer with Web development experience.

However, if you plan on having an ecommerce capability and online store, you'll require a professional developer who can build the necessary catalog and fulfillment options. Even if you decide to use an existing service, such as PayPal or Shopify, a professional will be required to build the interface that integrates the ecommerce piece with your website.

STRONG SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

Having a strong presence on social media is equally as important as having a well-designed website. And like your website, how you structure and handle your social media — including which platforms you choose to use — depends largely on your target audience and the message you want to get across.

For example, if your business is B2B, you'll likely want a strong presence on LinkedIn. If, on the other hand, your business is B2C and you sell a visually rich product to women of childbearing age, Pinterest would be a good bet. Have a mass consumer-friendly product? Facebook could be your best friend.

It's not enough to simply choose your social media platforms and sign up. They need to be connected to any marketing campaigns you are managing. Just as it's a waste of your time and dollars to send people to a nonworking website, it's equally useless to drive people to a Facebook page that is out of date and has little relevant content. Before you start on a campaign — email or otherwise — check your social media to make sure it's up to date, connected with the campaign, offers valuable content, and shows your company off in the best light possible.

SEARCH ENGINE RANKING

SEO (Search Engine Optimization) and keyword analytics go hand in hand with your social media and content strategy.

SEO and SEM (Search Engine Marketing) are about getting your website on the first page of Google, Yahoo!, or Bing when clients search for relevant keywords or phrases.

For instance, if you run a window and door company in Pleasantville, you want any local who does a search for "window and door company Pleasantville" to see your business right at the top of the list of search results. The same holds true for national searches. Let's say your business sells out-of-the-box architectural blueprints for building small homes. Your clients could be from anywhere in the world. The goal would be for your SEO and SEM efforts to have your business show up on page one of the search engine results for those keywords.

SEO and SEM are critically important for businesses that are spending money on paid search and pay-per-click campaigns, but they are equally important when it comes to organic (nonpaid) search rankings. Keep in mind that if your site is optimized properly, you should come up pretty high in Google listings organically, without having to pay for ad placement.

Regardless, in order to be most effective, companies need a multipronged SEO and SEM strategy — a strategy that starts with understanding your customers' interests and the terms they are searching for, the terms that are most popular within your industry, and what content will help get your site recognized by both prospective clients and search engines.

In developing your SEO and SEM strategy, keep the following in mind:

1. ENGAGE A TRUSTWORTHY SEARCH TEAM

Unless you have the in-house talent to manage your own SEO, you may want to hire a professional. As with Web developers, SEO companies are a dime a dozen, and it's too easy for even smart companies to get duped by flashy sales techniques and false promises that are ultimately not backed up with the needed tools, knowledge, or ability to implement. At Data-Dynamix we talk to clients on a weekly basis who are unhappy with the results their "SEO Expert" is producing. The problem is compounded by SEO companies routinely claiming that it can take up to six months to change rankings — even while they are charging an upfront monthly fee.

A competent SEO company will provide you with reports at the beginning of an engagement that provide explicit search words and phrases to be targeted based on their research of your specific industry. Along with the keyword research, the company should provide you with an overall strategy for reaching the top of the search heap.

2. STAY ON TOP OF CHANGES IN SEARCH

Unfortunately SEO is not a one-and-done phenomenon. To stay at the top of the search results, you'll need to stay tuned to how your customers' search terms and how Google and others' search engine algorithms change over time. For example: About a year ago, Google changed its search algorithm so that backlinks became less important than social engagement in driving top-tier search results. This is why it's critically important that your social media strategy take into account consistently creating new content and finding ways to engage with your audience. It's not just about likes, either. It's about comments, suggests, feedback, etc.

3. DON'T OVER-RELY ON SEO

SEO is a great tool for feeding the bottom of your sales funnel. If someone is searching for keywords related to your products or services, they have essentially prequalified themselves as being at least somewhat interested in what you offer. We call this audience "high intenders."

Be aware, however, that search is not an entirely democratic area of marketing simply because the majority of people use Google to conduct a search — and Google controls both the "buy side" and the "sell side." In other words, they determine exactly how results appear on any given search string. This doesn't mean that you should ignore SEO, but you should not be dedicating 100 percent of your time, effort, or budget to it either. At Data-Dynamix we recommend that SEO be about 10 percent of your marketing budget, and it should only be one of the strategies you employee to drive people to your website.

The biggest mistake we see many marketers make is thinking that search engine optimization is all they need. The

Google "halo effect" has a lot of people thinking that SEO is the key to marketing success — it's not. Since search is "bottom of funnel," you also need top-of-funnel activities like display ads, social media, and content

marketing. Remember, people will often search for you based on having seen you mentioned elsewhere, thanks to your other "top of the funnel" marketing efforts.

4. KEEP FRESH CONTENT COMING

The trick to being found in a search is not a trick: It involves genuinely monitoring the relevancy of your site's content and constantly pushing updated content. Search engines eat up fresh content, whether it's blog posts, new pages, press releases, or other updated content on your site. While Google is constantly changing its algorithms around how search results are displayed, one thing that tends to stay consistent is favoritism toward fresh content.

GOOGLE ALSO PAYS ATTENTION TO BACKLINKS:

other sites linking back to your site. The assumption is that if other credible and important players are linking to you, then you must be credible and important as well. For example: You can write an original-content guest post for a leading website in your industry; then you can include a link back to your site in the article byline or in the content of the post.

Even as we write this, keep in mind that Google is always changing its algorithms, so there's no way to rig search results in your favor. Your best bet is to consistently offer value-added, original content on your own site and the Internet at large.

LANDING PAGES & MICROSITES

Landing pages are a digital marketing machine foundation that many marketers give short shrift. Any ad campaign you launch will encourage your audience to go somewhere and do something. This magical place you send them is called a landing page. All too often, we see marketers design amazing email campaigns, but then neglect to spend time making the landing page sing. They may get thousands of hits to the site, but if the landing page is not well developed and designed, it often won't convert to sales leads — just lookie loos.

Effective landing pages take customers from a targeted email campaign or ad and deliver into their hands the exact information they are expecting and need to make a decision to purchase — in that moment. Without a properly executed landing page, customers might arrive at your website and navigate around a bit, but they also can get lost after just a few clicks.

There is an art to crafting an exceptional landing page. Some of the elements include:

- Consistent branding to match the business and the ad campaign.
- Clear calls to action.

- Clear places for the customer to sign up or opt in.
- Intuitive to use and free of unnecessary clutter.
- Clean, logical, and to the point.
- Limited navigation options so as to keep customers on the landing page.

The goal here is a simple one: Make it easy for your customers to sign up for what you are advertising and promoting.

If put together correctly, landing pages can serve as an essential tool for creating conversion. At Data-Dynamix we already know we can drive traffic with an email; we know we can get our audience to open a message and click on an offer. It's in the conversion game that a landing page can make or break the customer's journey through your funnel, including the following aspects:

1. MAKE THE RIGHT OFFER

When building a landing page, it's important to consider what you're trying to get your customer to do and who your customer is. Sales cycles vary from industry to industry. If you ask for too much too early, you'll alienate a potential customer. For example, if you run an assisted living facility, and you're attracting potential customers who are shopping around for a home for an elderly parent, you probably don't want to ask them to sign up on the spot and give their credit card information the moment they land on your page.

2. USE LANDING PAGES TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

When you initiate an email campaign, you shouldn't expect every recipient to buy or sign up immediately. The goal is to start to build a relationship with your audience and create an interest in what you are offering. You want to give the customers who don't buy on the spot enough information, incentive, and encouragement to keep coming back for more. It's a process, and over time you will build trust and eventually convert "high intenders" into satisfied customers.

3. OPTIMIZE YOUR LANDING PAGE OFFER FOR COMMITMENT

One of the biggest mistakes we see companies make with landing pages is asking for too much commitment, too soon. Despite the proliferation of online shopping, recognize that the average consumer is still afraid of obligations made online. It's important to tell your customers what you want them to do, but make sure the action you're asking them to take is realistic and appropriate.

Getting back to our assisted living facility example, let's say you're hosting an open house next Sunday. You might think it makes sense to send an email to your entire database inviting everyone to the open house, but the actual conversion rate on that effort would be disappointing. Showing up in person at an open house is an awfully big commitment for people who perhaps aren't quite ready to admit that they or their loved one needs to take this next step.

On the other hand, offering prospective clients an information packet and DVD as a starting point is a gentler approach to broaching the transitions they face.

An information packet in the back of a desk drawer, like an ongoing email relationship, is a long-term reminder that a facility exists to solve the problem.

Translation: Make your landing page a place where you ask for their address to send them a packet.

One of the biggest mistakes we see companies make with landing pages is asking for too much commitment, too soon.

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PART II:

STRATEGIZE YOUR DIGITAL MARKETING MACHINE

With the foundations of your digital marketing machine firmly in place, you're ready to get the word out about your brand. This means determining which channels would be the best for distributing your message. In this part of the eBook, we'll dig into the main distribution methods, but as our digital world evolves, keep in mind that new channels are created daily. At the same time, traditional advertising channels such as newspaper, radio, television, direct mail/shared mail, and billboard advertising are still relevant. They may not be the only game in town anymore (mobile devices are manufactured and distributed five times more than televisions), but they can arguably be part of the larger mix that includes digital advertising.

Still, there are lessons to be learned from traditional advertising. For example, Traditional Marketing 101 tells us not to just put up a billboard, but to put up several. In fact, add a few radio spots and TV commercials to the mix so you can catch your audience's attention multiple times.

The same principle applies in the digital domain. You need to engage multiple online channels in order to make your digital marketing machine productive. These channels work in concert and depend on each other (remember our earlier machine analogy?) to advertise your business. Here are the major channels you may want to employee to rev up your digital marketing machine.

EMAIL MARKETING

There are hundreds of companies today whose sole purpose is to help you create, deliver, and manage your email marketing. Constant Contact, MailChimp, and iContact are just a few of the bigger players in this overcrowded field. These companies house the organically built lists that you provide, which are mainly made up of prior customer contact information. In general they:

- Provide customer relationship management (CRM) tools to help you store and organize your contacts.
- Provide templates that allow you to build professional-quality emails.
- Offer a system to send regular large-scale marketing emails out easily.
- Help you track results.

In general there are three distinct ways a company can employee email marketing. They are:

1. ORGANIC EMAIL

Organic email marketing is comprised of contacts that a company has collected on its own, either online or in a brick-and-mortar location. Regardless of how they were collected, what these email addresses have in common is that the recipients have all given the company permission to send information on a periodic basis.

For example, the Anaheim Angels baseball team has developed a list of email addresses from selling tickets online. In order to buy tickets to a game, the customer must set up an account on the Anaheim Angels website, which includes providing an email address. The client then has the option of checking a box, which gives the Anaheim Angels permission to send out promotional emails.

When done right, email marketing can be a boon to your business, but you are always walking a fine line to avoid customer burnout. One way to avoid this is to only send out emails of high relevance. Getting back to the Anaheim Angels, here are some appropriate ways they might use their email list:

- Sending a message announcing that tickets are on sale for the big 4th of July fireworks game
- Letting subscribers know that the Los Angeles Dodgers are coming to town
- Spreading hype about a big game against the Yankees

However, if the Angels start sending their list emails about a special sale from the local Chevy dealership, it would not just be irrelevant, it would border on inappropriate. This can result in your messages being considered spam, and spam is the quickest way to have people opt out.

Spam stems from irrelevance, undermines legitimate email enterprise, and derails your email marketing — so think carefully about what you are sending, to whom, and how often.

2. INTERNAL EMAIL

If you've ever been to Costco, you've probably stopped at one of the aisle ends and enjoyed a free snack from one of the food sample tables.

Statistically, people who stop and sample those tasty treats are 365 percent more likely to purchase the food product being featured than other shoppers.

Similarly, your internal database of existing customers consists of a prequalified audience looking to do business with you. Like the customers at Costco, they've already "tasted" your products and services (so to speak) and like them.

By the way, internal databases execute at a much higher rate than external databases, which are usually purchased. They tend to have higher click-through and open rates because everyone on the list has already interacted with the company in some regard — they've already opted in.

3. THIRD-PARTY EMAIL MARKETING

Acquiring an external third-party email list (nonorganic) can help you target new customers that share certain demographic or psychographic qualities with your existing customers. The value of using such a list is pennies on the dollar in terms of potential return. It's exponentially more affordable and effective than traditional direct mail. Nonorganic lists are gathered from many different sources, such as when you join a social media site, fill out a home loan application, apply for a credit card, or opt in to a database and click the box saying that you accept certain terms and conditions.

Because third-party lists are gathered according to specific criteria, if a business buys a list from a finance magazine, they can reasonably assume that the names on that list contain people interested in finance. If a list is comprised of people who read Sports Illustrated, it's a safe bet they are interested in sports.

It takes a lot of legwork to grow a business purely through organic email, and using third-party (nonorganic) data can help back-fill your organic list so you can grow your potential customer base. Keep in mind that third-party email lists are compiled in many different ways. All lists are not created equal, and the quality of data varies depending on how it was acquired and compiled.

The biggest risk with nonorganic email lists is that they can result in what's called list fatigue. Email lists available on the open market are accessible by any company willing to buy them. Since list owners don't always monitor opt-outs and unsubscribes — or pay attention to the saturation point at which too many messages are being sent to the recipients — these lists get "blown out." This means that recipients have stopped paying attention and responding — rendering the lists ineffective.

Regardless of whether you are using a third-party or organic list, email marketing provides you with an excellent opportunity to reach your customers in a place where they go every day: their inbox. With the rise of social media, many marketing pundits have argued that email will die, but time and again email has been proven to be a viable tool for sending highly targeted messages to a specific audience. Social media and new technologies have not destroyed the power of email but enhanced its power.

Email marketing provides you with an excellent opportunity to reach your customers in a place where they go every day: their inbox.

PROGRAMMATIC DIGITAL ADVERTISING

Programmatic advertising (aka programmatic marketing or programmatic media) relates to technologies that automate the buying, placement, and optimization of media inventory. Today, there are a wide variety of digital advertising channels available to get your message out to your potential customers. Your audience is not exclusively on one website, app, or social media platform. Therefore, having a strategic mix of various programmatic advertising options gives you the best opportunity to reach your audience. Here are seven of the options to consider:

1. BANNER ADS

Banner ads are the most prevalent ad type found on most websites. They are usually a conventional size, grab your attention visually, and most importantly — are obviously ads. The format and style a company uses depends on whom they are targeting and what they provide. Many companies build different banner ads to display on different websites for various niche audiences. This helps segment a campaign for the most efficient audience targeting.

2. POP-UP ADS

We've all seen pop-ups ads, and probably all cursed them at least once. These are the ads that pop up in a new window when you land on a particular page. We generally don't recommend that our clients use pop-ups, because they can be so irritating to consumers.

3. CONTEXTUAL ADVERTISING

Contextual advertising is about aligning with the interests of a certain audience. For instance, say you're trying to reach men age 25–40 who run daily. You could specifically target ads to sports-related websites who share an audience of this same demographic. This advertising tactic has long been practiced in the newspaper and magazine industries, where sports-related ads are placed in the sports section or next to an article about sports. This same idea translates to the Internet.

4. SEARCH RETARGETING

We'll talk more about search in the next section, but just a brief mention here. Search retargeting presents ads to users based on what they type into a search bar. This is a very direct way of feeding consumers ads for products they proactively express interest in. However, it's important to note that Google has recently closed the gates on search retargeting from their platform.

5. SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING

Social media platforms have begun to add advertising options. For example: Facebook is a surprisingly strong contender in the display-

ad game. In feeding their subscribers ads, Facebook leverages the demographic information entered in when someone first opened their account, including marriage status, age, job, and gender, among other things. Facebook also keeps track of information entered as someone continues to use the service.

With all of that information, and through some algorithmic matching, Facebook users are fed ads based on their demographics and interests. We often recommend Facebook advertising to our clients because the volume of traffic on Facebook is phenomenal, and their demographic-gathering techniques are state of the art.

Facebook advertising can be a great way to not only target consumers but also create B2B relationships.

Social media advertising can get even more sophisticated. Say you're on an ecommerce site looking around at boots. Later, you go on Facebook or Twitter, and lo and behold, there's an ad for the boots you were looking at earlier. This is called retargeting.

6. MOBILE MARKETING

Phones today are not just phones anymore. With mobile marketing a business can check in with consumers whenever and wherever they are. Want to send a special offer to everyone at the football stadium enjoying the game this Sunday? Mobile marketing allows advertisers an unlimited opportunity to capitalize on geographic targeting and reach customers wherever they are — almost all day long.

7. VIDEO ADS

Video is one of the newer contenders in display advertising and has the same great data filters that other digital advertising mediums possess. After Google, YouTube is the biggest search engine site on the Internet, and since increasing numbers of people are consuming videos across multiple devices, video ads are a logical advertising solution for many companies. Most video clips on the Internet begin with a 15- to 20-second pre-roll ad before you can watch the feature. Want to see Jimmy Fallon's latest skit? No problem, but first you have to watch a Ford commercial. That's the price of entry for free information and entertainment.

And video advertising is only going to keep growing. For small businesses, the downside of this is that video can be fairly expensive to create. While anyone can create a banner ad on their computer with rudimentary, and even free, graphic design software, a top-notch video (even one less than a minute long) can cost several thousand dollars to produce.

For this reason, most companies consider video to be an advanced advertising strategy, but if you have the budget, we highly recommend it. Video is significantly more engaging than regular display advertising, and if you're already advertising on TV, you can definitely do video as well or instead of. One thing you can count on: consumer behavior is evolving, and a preference for video is proven.

Regardless of which digital ad types you decide to pursue, the design of your ads is a critical factor in their success. You can have the best media placement in the world, but if the creative aspect of the ad is not effective, don't expect to see results. Ads should be clean looking, have a strong call to action, and be on brand.

Businesses that really get this have turned digital advertising into both an art and a science. Some companies have created different ads for various times of day, knowing that consumers purchase one thing when they are sitting at their desks at work and another when lounging around watching TV in the evening.

The biggest mistake we see companies make is expecting that one single digital ad will hit a home run. They put the ad up once and expect instant overnight success. We counsel our clients to think like their customers think. Customers don't generally convert the first time they see an ad. After all, people love to buy, but hate to be sold to.

Customers don't generally convert the first time they see an ad. After all, people love to buy, but hate to be sold to.

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There is no simple answer for how many times a consumer needs to see an ad before making a purchase. It depends on a wide variety of factors: How credible is the company or brand? What's the goal of the ad? Who is the target market? How large is the purchase? Although digital advertising is often set up so that the average Joe or Jane can create and establish his or her own online ads, we highly recommend enlisting an expert who can walk you through the technical babble and insert their expert industry knowledge.

PAY PER CLICK

Pay-per-click, or PPC, is essentially paid search. To the novice advertiser, this usually means opening an AdWords account with Google, entering a credit card number, and then "spraying and praying." But there is a better, more mindful way.

PPC is an arena in which we definitely recommend bringing in a professional to run your campaign. A pro has the experience to know exactly how to engineer your ads for success. You could take the time to learn how yourself, then test various scenarios to see what works, but since you'll be spending money the entire time, it behooves you to spend it wisely by investing in a pro's knowledge and experience.

Keep in mind that even a professional will need to do a lot of testing in order to see what works for your company. He or she will hone in on specific keywords and phrases to see which ones attract the most (and the right) customers, then help you focus the majority of your search budget on those terms. Constant and vigilant analysis of your ad parameters will

reap the biggest investment for your search budget. Remember, Google is a business — not an altruistic nonprofit. If you're not careful in how you set up your search-ad parameters, you could find yourself blowing through a lot of money quickly — with little return. Hiring a professional can help you make sure that doesn't happen.

If you do decide to go the paid-search route, keep in mind that although Google owns two-thirds of the search market, Bing and Yahoo! are still contenders, so if your budget permits, you should be paying to optimize all three. Each attracts a different type of clientele: Google is mainstream, but Bing tends to get a more technologically savvy audience, and Yahoo!'s audience is less tech savvy.

For example, we ran one test looking at search analytics and found that people who used Bing tended to spend more time on the client's site once they found it and visited more pages on the site than a comparable Google user did. From this study, it made sense for our client to focus on paying for Bing search results since in this case, Bing gave bigger bang for the buck.

The bottom line: We've had experiences with clients who were only paying for Google search and seeing mediocre results; as soon as they added Bing and Yahoo!, they experienced a big lift in performance.

CONTENT MARKETING (BLOGS/EBOOKS)

Content marketing involves creating valuable free information assets that drive people to your site and other paid offers. In creating content, you establish your authority and prime the customer for a sale, because you are establishing your expertise with high-value content.

When it comes to authoritative content, blogs and eBooks are a great way to build customer engagement. In this age of competitive online marketing, people are only willing to give up their information for a good value trade. So how do you know what type of content to include in your blog or eBook?

So much of the content we see on the Internet today is rehashed, overshared, and unoriginal. With over 500 million tweets, 1.5 billion Facebook users, and 3 billion Google searches a day, you would think there would be more originality, yet a significant portion of the content on social media forums is plagiarized.

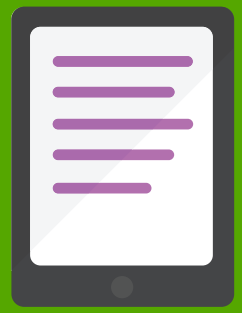
In addition, many companies take shortcuts by reusing the thoughts, words, and pictures previously posted by others on their blogs and in their eBooks. While not plagiarism per say, rehashing of another's content is less valuable for a company's brand than presenting new and fresh ideas of their own. That's not to say that there is no validity in sharing others' ideas. An important piece of information can be included, especially if it is given proper credit. For example: "I was just reading this spot-on piece by so-and-so about such-and-such, and I wanted to share it because..." In

other words, the setup for the sharing of information is important. The information itself might not be original to you, but the perspective you offer should be.

At Data-Dynamix, we've deployed hundreds of thousands of pieces of content, and we know what works and what doesn't. As you create content, ask yourself these three questions:

- Are you bringing some insight to the topic?
- Is your information (and are you) credible?
- Are you making it enjoyable? Is it fun or interesting to read?

If you can hit on all three of these points, congratulations, you're creating engaging content.



When it comes to authoritative content, blogs and eBooks are a great way to build customer engagement.

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PART III:

REV UP YOUR DIGITAL MARKETING MACHINE

Having determined the best advertising method(s) for your digital marketing machine, you now face the task of implementing your strategy. How you set up and execute the campaigns you have chosen to run is critical to your ultimate success in the digital marketing world. A few important issues to consider include the following:

SPECIFY YOUR TARGET MARKET

To establish the ideal target(s) for a specific email marketing campaign, an in-depth needs analysis must first be done to determine exactly who the promotional message should be aimed at — in other words, who the ideal customer is. There are several steps in this process.

The first is to consider the desired geographic attributes of your target market. Geographic breakdowns can be based on zip code, county, designated marketing area, metropolitan statistical area, or statewide or national filters. Once you know the geographic attributes you are looking to target, the next step is to determine the broad demographics.

Demographics for B2C can include gender, age, ethnicity, household income, net worth, and/or presence of children in the home. For B2B, they might include industry, company size, and job title. Finally, you need to identify the specific psychographic behaviors of your target market including common personality, attributes, values, opinions, attitudes, interests, and lifestyles.

Of course, any business ideally knows their customer base better than a marketing consultant does. So before hiring external digital marketing support, make sure you are consistently collecting information on your target market. Do this by tracking and analyzing the following:

- Who is visiting your website?
- Who is opting in to your email database?
- What industry do they work in?
- What is their age and gender?

ASK ONLY FOR WHAT YOU NEED

As you are going through the process of gathering this type of data, keep in mind that people don't want to divulge too much personal information too quickly. The collection techniques you use need to be simple and obstacle-free. The low-hanging fruit of course is getting a potential customer to provide you with their email address. To put your clients' minds at ease, make it clear that this information is for your internal use only and will not be shared. In addition, your customers will feel more at ease if you make it easy for them to unsubscribe at any time.

Phone numbers, on the other hand, are slightly trickier to land up front. Most people don't want to share their phone number this early in the conversation. However, as you build a relationship of trust and engagement with each potential customer, you earn the right to ask for more detailed information. How much information you ask for is directly related to the level of trust you've built up — and trust is built in stages.

CREATE AN OFFER THEY CAN'T REFUSE

When building your sales funnel, the most important content is the offer. We rarely get a call from a new client whose marketing plan is working perfectly. On the contrary, they usually call us because something isn't working, and they want our help fixing it. Often, it turns out that the client simply didn't have the right offer in place to make their marketing efforts pay off.

For example: One of our customers, a company that sells diet plans, sent out an email to their entire database offering $15 off a weight-loss program during the Thanksgiving season. The level of engagement was great, but it wasn't translating to conversions. In other words, people were reading the email, but they weren't following through and buying.

When we took a closer look at the offer, we discovered that the $15 savings (10% off of the regular price) was roughly equivalent to the price of lunch. For someone trying to lose weight, saving the price of one lunch just wasn't a strong enough motivation to press "buy." A person who is chronically unhappy about their weight isn't primarily concerned with saving money; they're focused on losing weight. We concluded that a more effective emotional email campaign would be "Lose twelve pounds and get a head start on the New Year."

CREATE AN OFFER WITH IMPACT

As you build your offer, keep in mind that, like the rest of your content, it must be both credible and engaging.

When presenting an offer to your database through email, you have about five seconds to make an impression. Another client of ours, a high-end roofing company, wasn't seeing a lot of action converting customers through emails with the subject line "60 Percent Off Labor!" They were pulling out their hair saying, "What are we doing wrong? That's a big savings!"

Regardless, their offer just wasn't resonating with the consumer. As we explained to them, the average homeowner didn't know how to translate that offer because they didn't know how much to expect to pay for roofing in the first place. As a result, the offer was essentially meaningless. What they needed to do was to create an offer via the email subject line that the customer would see the value in and be unable to ignore.

So often, companies fail to find the right speaking point to attach value to their services and products in the eyes of their target customers. Generally, this is because they are focused on what they have to offer, not what the customer is looking for. One way to create customer-focused subject lines is to take a page from the news media and look at how lead stories are announced — either on TV or online. For example: "Coming up in the next hour..."

- A New Study Shows 3 Things That Can Ruin Your Thanksgiving Dinner
- Why Calling Your Insurance Company Might Not Be a Good Idea
- Never Clean Your Windows Again

These headlines are both specific and universal. They are specific because each headline sets up an immediate boundary about what the content will contain. The reader knows exactly what he or she is getting into. But the headlines are also universal because they promise content that applies to everyone within a particular targeted pool of viewers. If you're new to writing content or creating offers, spend some time checking out the various news show headlines on their websites and on the tube.

We applied the same idea to our roofing client and recommended that their subject lines be more along the lines of:

- Never Again Worry About Your Roof
- Create Energy Efficiency for Every Season
- A Lifetime Warranty that Guarantees Your Roof Will Never Get Damaged

In other words, what can this offer mean to someone for whom money is not necessarily the deciding factor when weighing roofing options? The most important thing to this particular audience is peace of mind. You can't attach a number to that, but you can speak to it, with the right language.

SEND YOUR OFFER TO THE RIGHT AUDIENCE

When creating an offer for your sales funnel, keep in mind that it's not just the offer itself and the way it's worded but whom you are sending it to that is important. Are you talking to the right people to begin with?

Getting back to our roofing client, we also pointed out that the offer they were making — a higher-end metal roof — was being sent to people making less than $40,000 a year. Families living on a 40k annual income don't typically invest in roofs that cost more than five times what other roofing options cost. As a result, this was not a good use of our client's marketing budget.

BE **BOLD** ENOUGH TO ASK FOR BUSINESS

You have got your message well worded, and you have it plastered on the side of a bus that's cruising all over town. But what, exactly, are you asking people to do? Too often, companies think that once the message is out and about, their work is done, and they fail to take the next critical step.

If you drive your customers to a landing page with an email marketing campaign, be sure to let them know explicitly what you want them to do once they are there — and don't be shy about incentivizing them to buy right away. One model we've seen become very popular lately is the flash sale. This is an ecommerce method where a website places a product on sale for a particular period of time (usually 24–36 hours).

Or take a page from Amazon's book, and make the speed of delivery the enticement to buy immediately. When Amazon first started, they sold only books. While this was a relatively revolutionary idea at the time, Amazon still experienced a few iffy years with their revenue model. But as they expanded to sell other products — and as the Amazon Prime premium service was introduced — Amazon soon became a juggernaut in the ecommerce world. Out of toilet paper? Boom! One click and it will be at your door in two days. What consumer could refuse that offer? Amazon has revolutionized the way we shop by making buying now mean a super-speedy delivery.

amazon.com

Amazon soon became a juggernaut in the ecommerce world. Out of toilet paper? Boom! One click and it will be at your door in two days. What consumer could refuse that offer?

PART IV:

LET YOUR DIGITAL MARKETING MACHINE RUN

If you've followed the advice we have offered so far, your digital marketing machine should be humming along nicely, but to really get it working at full speed, automating your marketing is the required next step.

You now have the foundations in place to make use of the various advertising channels and to get your message out. But what happens when people start responding to your advertising? Are you prepared to manage the influx of inquiries and requests? Is your marketing machine set up to bring in new business? Marketing automation and retargeting are the two main ways your digital cogs and bolts work together as a true machine to propel your business forward.

MARKETING AUTOMATION

Remember our baseball analogy? You usually don't hit a home run the first time out, and you definitely don't hit a home run every time. The same is true with digital marketing. A one-time email blast is likely to produce the big hit you are looking for. Prospective customers and clients need multiple touch points and frequent reminders before they will buy. At the same time, you don't want to be seen as hassling them. Achieving this delicate balance can be confusing to novice marketers. Marketing automation is part of the key to sorting this all out.

What marketing automation does is help you to set up a campaign to automatically take your prospects through your sales funnel. Steps along the way often involve the things we have discussed in this eBook: display advertising, automated email, social media, and landing pages.

Marketing automation also helps you fine-tune your marketing approach to each specific individual. It allows your customers to opt in to the exact places they are interested in, having the effect of customizing their marketing experience with your company. For example, a customer has opted in to receive your emails and clicks through on one of your messages to a link offering more information. She is then taken to a landing page on your website, where she spends a little bit of time looking around but doesn't buy anything. A few days later, she's browsing the Web and comes across a page with an ad for the very item she was looking at on your site (remember programmatic ads). She decides to make the purchase, clicks through to your site, and hits the "buy" button.

Here's another simple example: You offer a free eBook on your website, and a visitor downloads it. The ensuing landing page upsells him to a $15 monthly subscription, giving him access to your basic service. The visitor bites and subscribes. From then on, he receives second-level offers every time he visits your site, receives an email from you, or sees a retargeted ad elsewhere. No longer will you advertise your basic subscription to him; he already has that. Now, you'll offer him the next step up every time he visits.

These are simplified scenarios, but in reality, most customers need quite a few touch points, spread out over time, before they commit to buy. However, you can see how marketing automation ties together all of the marketing capabilities we've been discussing in this eBook.

Your goal with marketing automation is to interact digitally with your potential customer and serve up offers, information, and advertisements specifically targeted to where they are in the funnel at any given time. The beauty of marketing automation is that this personal touch can be applied to thousands of customers at once, allowing each individual customer to see just the right message for them. The beauty of marketing automation is that it is both automatic and personal at the same time.

Marketing automation does take some time and effort to set up and implement, but once established, it can be a powerful tool for moving a large number of customers through your funnel in the most efficient and effective way.

RETARGETING

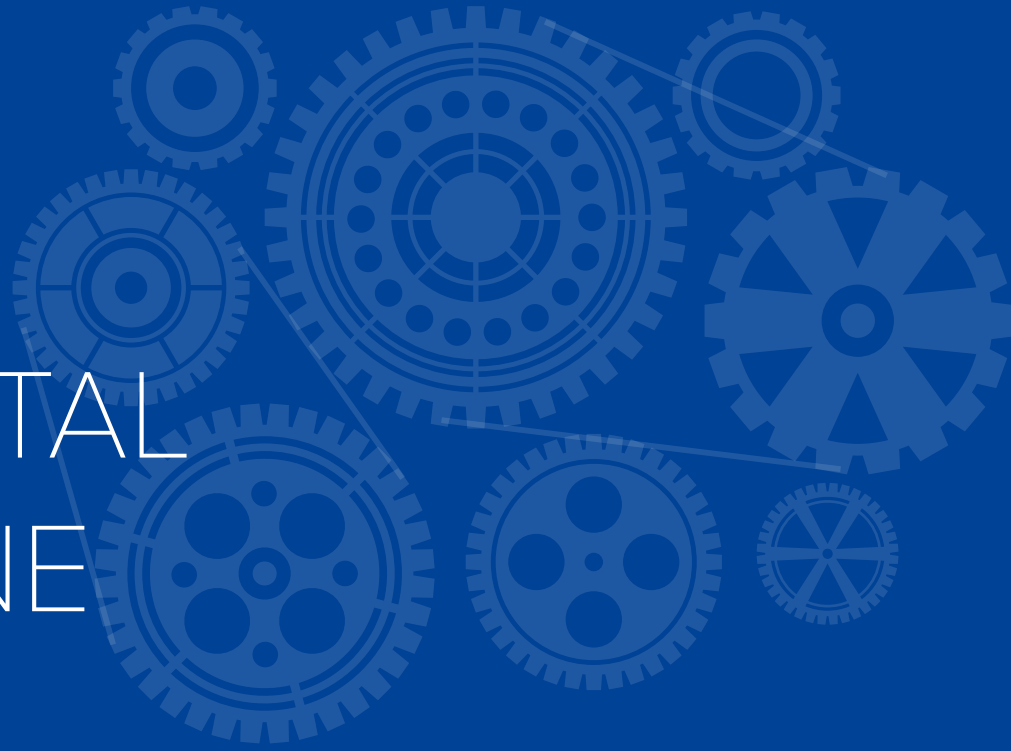
Retargeting is the aspect of your digital marketing machine that keeps it humming along — over time. Retargeting essentially involves following your customers around online and serving them up additional ads and offers on different channels — providing them multiple opportunities to convert.

Retargeting is in essence a subtle form of paid advertising. Let's say you go to Amazon.com and drop a six-pack of limited-edition San Francisco 49er ball-point pens (if such a thing exists) into your cart. Just as you are about to hit the "buy" button, the phone rings; you get distracted and wonder away from the purchasing screen. When you visit another website later in the day, an ad pops up featuring those exact pens you loaded into your cart but did not purchase. As you may have guessed, this is not a coincidence. This occurred because Amazon dropped what's called a cookie into your browser. This cookie acts as a beacon to draw the right ads to pages you browse on the Net. By serving you ads related to browsing you've already done, advertisers hope to remind you to come back and make the purchase.

Retargeting helps advertisers like Amazon keep you in the conversation. It's commonly known in marketing circles that only about 2 percent of people convert (in other words, come back) after an actual visit to an ecommerce site, but when a company employees retargeting, that number increases exponentially — up to 26 percent — over the days and weeks that follow. Because it is so unlikely that any type of digital marketing will lead to actual conversion at the initial touch point, retargeting is a highly sought-after method for increasing conversion rates down the line.

PART V:

TUNE UP YOUR DIGITAL MARKETING MACHINE



Once your sales funnel is in place and producing results, the next step is to monitor your digital marketing efforts and make adjustments as needed. In the same way that you take your car in for a regular checkup, you need to schedule your digital marketing machine for tune-ups.

The nice thing about digital advertising is that you get instant feedback on what's working and what's not, so you can make quick adjustments. With online advertising, you can set up several campaigns and let the resulting data tell you what to do next. But even with real-time digital feedback, we usually recommend that you let a campaign run for at least two weeks before making any changes. Two things in particular will help you tune up your digital marketing machine: analytics and intellimarketing.

ANALYTICS AND REPORTING

In every channel of digital marketing, analytics plays a key role in ongoing success. With any campaign, social media or otherwise, analytics that are set up properly from the beginning can help you determine how customers are reacting to and interacting with campaigns. Just remember, you can't measure the return if you're not collecting the basic information.

Used well, analytics allow you to see, for instance, that pay-per-click advertising is currently giving you a much better return on investment than email marketing. You can then fine-tune your spending to focus more on PPC. Using analytics to monitor your marketing efforts helps you get the most bang for your advertising buck. A few points to consider include the following:

Google Analytics and other website tracking software are good resources for monitoring your website traffic. We like Google Analytics because of its free version, which offers some amazing stats. Their paid version of course gives even deeper insight. In addition to tracking the results on your website, you also need to set up your social media analytics. Third-party programs like Hootsuite and Sprout Social can provide comprehensive reports on your social media profiles.

Email services can also provide valuable insight into how your email campaigns are performing. Data such as open rates, bounce rates, and click-through rates tell you a great deal about the effectiveness of your digital marketing efforts.

If you're running an omnichannel marketing campaign — meaning that it takes place on multiple platforms, like email, your website, and social media — it's critical to have UTM (Urchin Tracking Modules) codes in place so you can figure out which campaign is driving what percent of traffic. UTM codes will distinguish traffic from one campaign to the next and as such are a good way of measuring the effectiveness of your social campaign versus your email campaign versus pay-per-click, etc.

Bear in mind that unless you are paying an ad agency to collate all of your analytics information, there are currently no tools available to the layperson for planning, monitoring, and determining ROI across all digital marketing channels. This means that if you're not working with an agency, it's up to you to manually contrast and compare your Facebook, Google, and Constant Contact analytics, etc., and attempt to piece together the information on your own.

INTELLIMARKETING = INTELLIGENT MARKETING

Intellimarketing is essentially smart marketing based on intel and actual results. It gives you a view into what is trending in social media on which platforms and tells you who is searching for what on Google, Yahoo!, and Bing.

Having the intel on what your audience is searching for at any given moment in time is essential. We are always trying to tell our customers what they want and need, but often we don't realize that our customers are out there telling us what they want and need right back. We just have to listen.

At Data-Dynamix, we use intellimarketing to understand what consumers are looking for so we can fine-tune marketing campaigns in real time. Everything we've discussed in this eBook contributes to intellimarketing and can help you maximize your marketing potential. Intellimarketing also means being ready to react quickly: being poised to sell New England Patriots jerseys the minute the Super Bowl wraps up and offering small businesses tailored QuickBooks software during tax season. Intellimarketing is about providing solutions to trending problems in real time. This "tweak as you go" approach to marketing requires deliberately doing more of what is working — and less of what isn't.

A/B TESTING

When it comes to building an effective sales funnel, testing is an important path to results. Testing can help validate which of your offers are stronger, what subject lines are more effective, etc. Oftentimes, testing is done by using what's called an A/B split: testing factors one at a time against each other.

For example, you might send half your target audience an email with one subject line, and the other half the exact same email with a different subject line. The subject line that gets the largest open rate is the winner. You could also send the same message out to two different types of databases and see which audience reacts more strongly. By keeping all other factors the same, you can determine which group is a better bet for your marketing dollars.

A/B testing is commonly applied to email analytics, but it can be applied to any marketing strategy. You can learn valuable intel from running two ads that are slightly different, which then informs future ads and makes you a smarter marketer. If you decide to invest in A/B testing,

these tweaks to your marketing message will continually improve your response rates moving forward.

In short, A/B testing helps a company determine where their time, money, and marketing efforts would be best spent and contributes to building a stronger sales funnel. Without A/B testing, you're essentially just hoping to get lucky; with it, you have science on your side.

With online advertising, you can set up several campaigns and let the resulting data tell you what to do next.

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PART VI:

MEASURING HOW YOUR DIGITAL MARKETING MACHINE IS PERFORMING

Any marketer ultimately wants to feel confident that the money and energy spent on a marketing campaign has been worth it. Unfortunately, measuring that return on investment is not always a black-and-white proposition, and if you have unrealistic goals for your campaign, you will always be disappointed. For this reason it's important to keep in mind that there are two types of returns to keep your eyes on: micro- and macro-conversions.

MICRO-CONVERSIONS

Micro-conversions are the small actions that consumers take during your marketing campaign. These include:

- Opening an email and clicking on links to learn more about your goods or services.
- Visiting your website for the first time.
- Return website visits.
- Social media: "likes" on Facebook, Pinterest "pins," tweets on Twitter.
- Phone inquiries.
- Walk-ins to a retail establishment or a brick-and-mortar business location.

Cries of "It didn't work!" can often be heard from businesses after a marketing campaign, when actually, the campaign created many successful micro-conversions. Micro-conversions are valuable because they build loyalty. They are an essential part of the sales process, the places where a client learns to trust your brand. With enough micro-conversions in place, customers are more likely to convert to paying customers down the road.

As we mentioned earlier, when you understand that your goal is to get people to start going through your sales funnel, once you have accomplished that, you can call your campaign a success. After an email deployment, we often see that 90 percent or more of traffic to the website landing page is now coming from first-time visitors. This number is important because it will over time grow into new business. This may be an initial campaign, but other future marketing campaigns can build upon this foundation of micro-conversions.

MACRO-CONVERSIONS

When your marketing machine is hitting on all levels, you get macro-conversions. This is when someone hands you cash for your goods or services. Conversions don't happen with just any shot-in-the-dark marketing tactic. Yes, every now and then you will hit something based on timing alone, but those numbers will be small. Conversions happen when you have satisfied the needs of the customer by providing multiple touch points, over time.

Conversions happen when you have satisfied the needs of the customer by providing multiple touch points, over time.

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CONCLUSION

Well, how are you thinking about your digital marketing machine now? Do you still see your marketing actions as a bunch of cogs, nuts, and bolts lying around loose in a box? Or are you ready for a fully assembled, smoothly running digital marketing machine? We hope it's the latter. The bottom line is that when you have put in the work to build your foundation, decided on your direction, executed your plan, stayed consistent, and fine-tuned your efforts, you will have demonstrated to your potential customer that you are at the top of your industry and have earned the right to ask for their business.

And we hope that through this eBook and our other marketing efforts, we have earned your trust. Are you running well, but in need of a quick tune-up? Wherever you are in the process, you have opportunities to improve your brand recognition online, and we're here to help.

Data-Dynamix is your coach to help you get your digital marketing machine running smoothly. From the basic foundations, to building your channels, to automating and monitoring your machine, our experienced team can help coach you. We want to stand alongside your brand to help you succeed in digital marketing, and ultimately grow your business.

For more information on our services, please visit us at www.data-dynamix.com.