

## **1.18 DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY AND THE DIGITAL MARKETING PLAN**

In the modern landscape, a big part of a company's marketing strategy is digital. Consumers and businesses alike are almost always online -- and if organisations want to be able to reach them and observe their behavior where they spend the most time. But when a business is, it seems like this ever-evolving landscape can quickly become overwhelming. There's already enough to do -- how can the organisation create, fine-tune, and maintain an agile digital marketing strategy?

### **1.18.1 Planning your Digital Marketing Strategy**

All successful digital marketing strategies are able to clearly answer the following questions:

- 1. What does your business or organisation want to achieve?**
- 2. Who are your customers and prospects?**
- 3. How will you reach and engage these people?**
- 4. What are your expectations?**

### **1.18.2 What Is Digital Marketing Strategy?**

**In short:** Your digital marketing strategy is the series of actions that are going to help you achieve your goal(s) using online marketing. The term 'strategy' might seem intimidating, but building an effective digital strategy doesn't need to be difficult.

In simple terms, a strategy is just a plan of action to achieve a desired goal, or multiple goals. For example, your overarching goal might be to generate 25% more leads via your website this year than you drove last year. Depending on the scale of your business, your digital marketing strategy might involve multiple goals and a lot of moving parts, but coming back to this simple way of thinking about strategy can help you stay focused on meeting those objectives.

In the next section, it will focus on what a digital marketing campaign looks like, and then, outline the seven building blocks to help companies to create an effective digital marketing strategy to set up their business for online success.

### **1.18.3 What Is a Digital Marketing Campaign?**

As we've already outlined, the term digital **strategy** is the series of actions taken to help firms achieve their overarching marketing goal. **Digital marketing campaigns** are the building blocks or actions within the organisation's strategy to move towards meeting that goal.

For example, the organisation might decide to run a campaign to share some of its best-performing gated content on Twitter, to generate more leads through that channel. That campaign then becomes part of the strategy to generate more leads.

Hudson (2018) has compiled a list of **seven** digital marketing strategies that marketers can adapt to help their teams and businesses grow by designing the right digital strategy and marketing campaigns.

### **1.18.4 How to Build a Comprehensive Digital Strategy**

#### **1) Build the organisation's buyer personas.**

For any marketing strategy -- offline or online -- organisations need to design digital marketing strategies that are built upon detailed buyer personas, and the first step is to create them (refer to **Section 7.6 of Unit 1 for more information**)

Buyer personas represent your ideal customer(s) and can be created by researching, surveying, and interviewing your business's target audience. It's important to note that this information should be based upon real data wherever possible, as making assumptions about the audience can cause the organisation's marketing strategy to take the wrong direction.

To get a rounded picture of the persona, the organization's research pool should include a mixture of customers, prospects, and people outside their contacts database who align with the target audience. But what kind of information the company must gather for its own buyer persona(s) to inform of the digital marketing strategy? That depends on the

company's businesses, and is likely to vary depending on whether they are a B2B or B2C, or whether their product is high cost or low cost.

Here are some starting points, but organisations will need to fine-tune them, depending on the nature of the particular business.

### **Quantitative (or Demographic) Information**

- **Location.** Organisations can use web analytics tools like Google Analytics to easily identify what location their website traffic is coming from.
- **Age.** Depending on the nature of business, this may or may not be relevant. It's best to gather this data by identifying trends in the existing prospect and customer database.
- **Income.** It's best to gather sensitive information like personal income in persona research interviews, as people might be unwilling to share it via online forms.
- **Job Title.** It is advisable for companies to get a rough idea of from their existing customer base, and is most relevant for B2B companies.

### **Qualitative (or Psychographic) Information**


- **Goals.** Depending on the need that the company's product or service was created to serve, the organization might already have a good idea of what goals their persona is looking to achieve. However, it's best to cement their assumptions by speaking to customers, as well as internal sales and customer service representatives.
- **Challenges.** Again, speak to customers, sales and customer service representatives to get an idea of the common problems the organisation's audience faces.
- **Hobbies and interests.** Speak to customers and people who align with the organisation's target audience. If the organization is leading a fashion brand, for example, it's helpful to know if large segments of the audience are also interested in fitness and well-being, as that can help inform the future content creation and partnerships.
- **Priorities.** Speak to customers and people who align with the organisation's target audience to find out what's most important to them in relation to the business. For example, if you're a B2B software company, knowing that your audience values customer support over a competitive price point is very valuable information.

Take this information and create one or more rounded personas, like Marketing Molly below, and ensure they're at the core of your digital marketing strategy.

### Add a persona ✕

**Basic information**

Photo



Looking good!

Name \*

Persona description \*

## 2) Identify your goals & the digital marketing tools you'll need.

The marketing goals of the organization should always be tied back to the fundamental goals of the business. For example, if the business's goal is to increase online revenue by 20%, the goal as a marketer might be to generate 50% more leads via the website than was done last year to contribute towards that success.

Whatever your overarching goal is, you need to know how to measure it, and more important, actually be *able* to measure it (e.g., have the right digital marketing tools in place to do so). How you measure the effectiveness of your digital strategy will be different for each business and dependent on your goal(s), but it's vital to ensure you're able to do so, as it's these metrics which will help you adjust your strategy in the future.



### 3) Evaluate your existing digital marketing channels and assets.

When considering the available digital marketing channels or assets to incorporate into the strategy, it is important to identify the owned, earned, and paid media framework to help to categorise the digital ‘vehicles’, assets, or channels that are already being used.

#### Owned Media

This refers to the digital assets that the brand or company owns -- whether that’s the website, social media profiles, blog content, or imagery, owned channels are the things that the business has complete control over. This can include some off-site content but is not hosted on the company’s website, like a blog that the company publishes on Medium, for example.

#### Earned Media

Quite simply, earned media refers to the exposure earned through word-of-mouth. Whether that’s content distributed on other websites (e.g., guest posts), PR work done by the company, or the customer experience delivered, earned media is the recognition received as

a result. Media can be earned by getting press mentions, positive reviews, and by other people sharing the organisation's content on social media, for instance.

### **Paid Media**

Paid media refers to any vehicle or channel that the organization will spend money on to catch the attention of their buyer personas. This includes things like Google AdWords, paid social media posts, native advertising (like sponsored posts on other websites), and any other medium which is paid directly in exchange for visibility.

Gather what you have, and categorize each vehicle or asset in a spreadsheet, so you have a clear picture of your existing.

Your digital marketing strategy might incorporate elements of all three channels- **owned, earned, and paid media**, all working together to reach your organisation's goal.

For example, the organisation might have an *owned* piece of content on a landing page on your website to help to generate leads. To amplify the number of leads that content generates, it is important to make it shareable, meaning others are distributing it via their personal social media profiles, increasing traffic to the landing page. That's the *earned* media component. To support the content's success, when the organisation might have posted about the content to its Facebook page and have *paid* to have it seen by more people in your target audience.

It's all about evaluating the best solution to meet the organization's goal, and then incorporating the channels that work best for the organization's digital marketing strategy.

### **4) Audit and plan the organization's *owned* media.**

At the heart of digital marketing is the organisation's owned media, which takes the form of content. Every message that the brand broadcasts can generally be classified as content, whether it's your 'About Us' page, product descriptions, blog posts, ebooks, infographics, or social media posts. Content helps to convert the website visitors into leads and customers, and helps to raise the brand's profile online -- and when it's optimized, it can also boost any efforts to search/organic traffic. Whatever the goal, the organization will need to use owned content to form their digital marketing strategy.









To build your digital marketing strategy, you need to decide what content is going to help you reach your goals. If your goal is to generate 50% more leads via the website than you did last year, it's unlikely that your 'About Us' page is going to be included in your strategy -- unless that page has somehow been a lead generation machine in the past.

It might more likely that an ebook gated by a form on your website drives far more leads, and as a result, that might be something you want to do more of.

### 5) Audit and plan your *earned* media.

The next step consists of an evaluating of previous earned media against the current goals of the organization so as to know where to focus time. Look at where the organization's traffic and leads are coming from (if that's your goal) and rank each earned media source from most effective to least effective.

This information can be obtained from tools like Google Analytics, or the Sources Reports in the HubSpot software or LinkedIn where the company can see most people sharing your content, which in turn drives a lot of traffic.

Source	Visits	%	Contacts	%	Customers	%
 <b>Organic Search</b> Google, Bing, Yahoo, etc.	9,625	0.2%	17	0.0%	0	0.0%
 <b>Referrals</b> Links on other sites	17,136	0.2%	31	0.0%	0	0.0%
 <b>Social Media</b> Facebook, Twitter, Linked...	1,022	0.2%	2	0.0%	0	0.0%
 <b>Email Marketing</b> Email links	700	0.7%	5	0.0%	0	0.0%
 <b>Paid Search</b> Paid search advertisements	1	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
 <b>Direct Traffic</b> Manually entered URLs	44,815	0.3%	115	0.0%	0	0.0%
 <b>Other Campaigns</b> Other sources	21	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
 <b>Total</b>	73,320	0.2%	170	0.0%	0	0.0%

Data last updated 2 hours ago

## **6) Audit and plan your *paid* media.**

This process involves much of the same process: there is the need to evaluate the organisation's existing paid media across each platform (e.g., Google AdWords, Facebook, Twitter, etc.) to figure out what's likely to help towards meeting the current goals.

If your organisation has been spending a lot of money on AdWords and haven't seen the results then there will be the need to refine their approach, or scrap it altogether and focus on another platform that seems to be yielding better results.

By the end of the process, the organization should have a clear idea of which paid media platforms they want to continue using, and which (if any) need to be removed from the digital marketing strategy.

## **7) Bring it all together.**

After having completed the planning and the research, the organisation will have a solid vision of the elements that are going to make up their digital marketing strategy.

Here's what your organisation should have so far:

1. Clear profile(s) of your buyer persona(s)
2. One or more marketing-specific goals
3. An inventory of your existing owned, earned, and paid media
4. An audit of your existing owned, earned, and paid media
5. An owned content creation plan or wish list

Now, it's time to bring all of it together to form a cohesive digital marketing strategy document. Let's revisit what **digital strategy** means: the series of actions that are going to help your organisation to achieve their goal(s) using online marketing.

By that definition, the strategy document should map out the series of actions to be taken to achieve their goals, based on your research to this point. A spreadsheet is an efficient format -- and for the sake of consistency, it is important to map out according to the owned, earned, and paid media framework used so far.



There is also the need to plan the strategy for a longer-term period -- typically, something like 12 months is a good starting point, depending on how the business is set up. n. For example:

- In January, the organisation might start a blog which will be continually updated once a week, for the entire year.
- In March, the organization might launch a new e-book, accompanied by paid promotion.
- In July, the organisation might be preparing for their biggest business month -- what the organisation has observed at this point will influence the content you produce to support it?
- In September, the organisation might plan to focus on earned media in the form of PR to drive additional traffic during the run-up.

By taking this approach, the organisation is creating a structured timeline for their activity, which will help communicate the plans to the organisation staff for their action.

### **1.19 DIGITAL MARKETING PLAN**

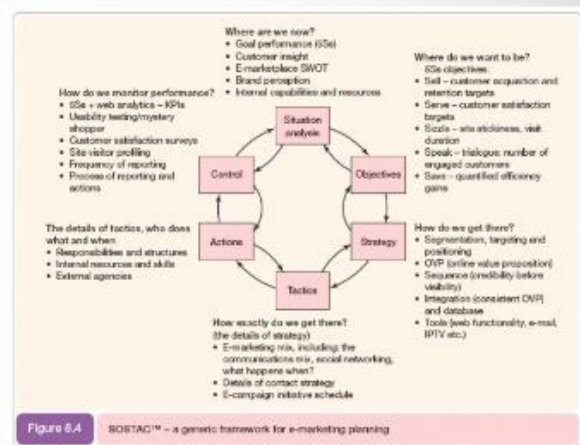
The purpose of a **digital marketing plan** for any organisation is to force you through the process of researching and clearly articulating the aims and goals of your **digital** initiatives, along with clearly targeting **digital** personas, and methodically choosing which channels to go after them and how. (<https://digitalmarketinginstitute.com/blog/planning-a-digital-marketing-campaign> )

#### **Your Path to Digital Marketing Strategy Success**

The strategy document will be very individual to the organisation's business, which is why it's almost impossible to create a one-size-fits-all digital marketing strategy template. Remember, the purpose of the digital strategy document is to map out the actions to be taken to achieve the goals over a period of time -- as long as it communicates that, then you've nailed the basics of creating a digital strategy.

# PLAN - Digital marketing strategy

- Several strategy models
- SOSTAC - Model is recommended by PR smith and Smart Insights
- Consists of 5 steps:
  - Where are we now
    - Current status
  - Where do we want to be ?
    - 5 objectives : (Sell, Serve, Sizzle, Speak, Save)
  - How do we get there ?
    - Segments, targets, positioning, OVP, Integration, Tools)
  - How exactly do we get there ?
    - Digital marketing Mix, Schedule etc
  - The details of tactics
    - Organizational model, responsibilities
  - How do we monitor performance
    - KPI:s and constant development
  - ALWAYS PLAN BEFORE ACT.



PLAN > REACH > ACT > ENGAGE SOURCE: PR Smith, Smart Insights

zealand.

kesNiviikonia 3. lokakuuta 2012

(Source : SOSTAC Planning framework, Smith, 2017, p. 3).

<http://www.mediaocean.com/digital-marketing-guide/overview-history>

In today's hyper-connected world, any business can thrive or die based on their company's unique digital marketing plan. Many of the organisation's customers will come directly from an online location. Whether this is through a mobile device, a home computer or a tablet, it's important to have a dedicated plan in place for those customers.

To meet the needs of each of these customers, a **good digital marketing plan** requires a large web of connected digital channels. There is the need to create one dedicated platform that integrates all of these aspects. There are quite a few good ones available that the organization should consider -- think Google, Facebook, HubSpot, MailChimp, etc. Each platform has its uses, and the organisation will need to create a plan and use what works best for them.

**Oliveira (2017)** suggest that best way to build a good online marketing strategy is to break it up into four distinct, actionable steps which are shown as follows:

## **1. Review Your Current Digital Marketing Strategies**

Reviewing your current digital marketing strategy can take many different forms. If you're just starting out, this step will be quite simple. However, if your company has planned many digital marketing campaigns in the past, you might be dealing with an endless amount of web assets strewn across a variety of sites. As plans change and these sites cease to be maintained, they can become detrimental to your business.

Try asking the following questions to find all online presences that the organization currently have:

- What social media sites do we have profiles on?
- Do we have a YouTube channel or any other videos posted online?
- What were our past marketing campaigns? What worked and what didn't work?

Completing this list will create a solid foundation for your organisation to start a new online marketing strategy. Remember that successful websites need to be responsive across a wide array of devices, so it is important to check the responsiveness of the current web assets.

## **2. Create The Plan, And Choose The Team And Timeline**

This is the bread and butter of your new digital marketing campaign. Your plan will likely succeed or fail based on how completely it has been developed.

The first thing that your organisation should consider is which platform they are going to use. For example, consider HubSpot, Facebook, MailChimp and Google as these platforms offer the opportunity to get certified and provide a deeper understanding of the features available that can be utilized for each campaign.

Once the platform has been selected, the organization should choose a team to run the new digital marketing campaign. You will need people who will remain dedicated to the plan throughout the implementation and revision stages. They will need to continually track the success of the plan in order to tweak it as needed.

The last step of the plan creation stage is to create a timeline. Clear goals must be set for your internet marketing team. This should include when web development should be completed by, and recurrent plans for proper search engine optimisation across all of your web assets.

### **3. Execute And Launch The Campaign**

Though this step may seem easy, it can take days or even weeks to properly launch your organisation's online marketing campaign. You want to make sure that each of your new web assets goes online at the best possible time and that all of the software is working as intended. The majority of digital marketing campaign launches don't go according to plan, or they don't stay on schedule. Be realistic about how much time needs to be set aside for your campaign launch and be sure that you have a mechanism for proper tracking in place. There are plenty of online marketing tools available to help you identify the calls, emails and inquiries made as a result of your campaign.

When speaking with new customers, don't hesitate to ask how they have found your organisation. You should also consider adding surveys to a few of your online assets. This is a great way to track your incoming customer traffic and measure the effectiveness of your campaign.

### **4. Measure Using Data From The Analytics And Optimize**

In the months following the launch of your organization's new digital marketing drive, you will need to constantly measure its success through the data from the web analytics. In digital marketing, a business that isn't ready to adjust and optimize will have a difficult time creating a successful internet marketing plan.

#### **Next: Take Further Action for Measurement and Implementation**

Unfortunately, even the best-laid digital marketing plans fail when there's no game plan for measurement and implementation. Even if your organization will do everything perfectly and build the most brilliant digital marketing strategy out there will still be the need to use these four steps to create a consistent, smart marketing strategy.

## **1.20 ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF DIGITAL MARKETING**

With digital marketing, customers benefit with timely information 24 hours a day and 7 days a week because of its ability for instant communication. Digital marketing offers more choices and flexibility and at the same time huge inventories, storage costs, utilities and space rental are eliminated. Unlike traditional marketing, digital marketing is more affordable. With digital marketing, you can reach a larger audience in a short time span. It allows also 24 hours of service to make purchase for the customers as well as prices are transparent (Satya, 2015).

### **1.20.1 Benefits of Digital Marketing**

**What are the benefits?**

#### **Reach**

The nature of the internet means businesses and organisations can have a truly global reach. Businesses can now reach more people, faster, easier, in any part of the world. For SMEs competing against the big organizations, digital marketing can level the playing field.

#### **Targeting and demographics**

Google, LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter all provide (anonymous) information about their users, allowing businesses to craft compelling, targeted campaigns. As compared to traditional advertising, this gives marketers huge control over their campaigns and costs and target the right segment for the industry e.g senior managers in the oil and gas sector, men in China between 28-40 years old or teenagers with an interest in social media? Digital marketing makes it possible.

#### **Increased engagement**

The flexibility of digital marketing presents opportunities to increase engagement with your target audience. A frequently updated website, regular email newsletter and an active social media presence are just some examples which give brands and businesses the ability to connect and raise awareness with their existing and prospective customer base.

## **Immediacy**

Digital allows marketers to respond to and jump on news and events happening right now, at minimal cost with excellent returns.

## **Measurement**

One of the greatest benefits of digital marketing is being able to measure the effectiveness of everything you do in real-time. Tools such as Google Analytics and KISS Metrics accurately tell the company how a visitor arrived at its website, what they did and whether they resulted in a sale or enquiry. This information can be used to test, refine and improve the online marketing campaigns as they run. There are online-based analytics for practically every digital marketing channel: email, social media, online advertising.

## **Return on investment**

Importantly, digital marketing is extremely cost-effective as it has excellent reach and can be measured effectively so that marketers can adapt digital marketing strategies over time and see exactly which marketing channels are working. Marketers can therefore invest in lucrative marketing opportunities and scrap those which aren't working

## **Benefits Of Digital Marketing**



(Source: <https://www.webintegrations.co.uk>).

### **1.20.2 Disadvantages of Digital Marketing**

Coming to the disadvantages, firstly there is no face-to-face contact involved. You cannot touch, try, taste or smell the products. Digital marketing is dependability on technology, security, privacy issues, maintenance costs due to a constantly evolving environment, higher transparency of pricing and increased price competition, and worldwide competition through globalisation (Gangeshwer, 2013).

## **1.21 CONCLUSION**

The digital market is in a constant state of flux. Yasmin *et al.*, (2015) concluded that “just like Rome was not built in a day, so, digital marketing results won’t come without attempt and trial and error.” A digital marketing professional must find ways to keep up with this change. They need to be able to keep an eye out for emerging trends and the development of newer and smarter Search Engine Algorithms. After all, nobody can afford to get left behind in this race.

Digital marketing has moved forward at extreme pace over the last 20 years and the way that people’s lifestyles have changed in the last 20 years is arguably beyond how they has changed in the 50 years before that: the introduction of the internet, mass smartphone usage, tablets, every age group becoming digitally savvy and so on – and the pace is not slowing. Understanding the marketing models that have been established for some time and how to apply them to your digital marketing strategy gives us a foundation to begin our strategy.

## **1.22 CHAPTER CHECKLIST**

- A history of digital marketing
- Definition of digital marketing
- The 4 Ps of marketing
- Segmentation
- Types of online presence
- Digital marketing platforms
- Digital marketing strategies
- Digital marketing plan