

DIGITAL MARKETING ON A SMALL BUDGET

Customer acquisition & retention.

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Introduction

Two of the biggest misconceptions about digital marketing are that it is expensive, and only relevant for national companies. If you think this is true, you are missing out on a lot of customers.

Customers now expect every business to be online. No matter how big or small your budget, or whether you are an international, national or local business, prospective customers are judging you and making decisions based on the information you present to them (or don't - which means your competitors are winning).

Digital marketing should be at the centre of your customer acquisition AND retention.

Here are some statistics about how consumers behave online when looking to make a purchase:

- 78% of mobile searches for local business information result in a purchase
- 46% of customers read reviews and blogs before purchasing online
- 84% of online shoppers referring to at least one social media site for recommendations before shopping online

This book will give you the knowledge and tools you need to successfully use digital marketing, even with limited time and money.

The topics covered in this book

This book does not delve into theoretical concepts, nor does it provide a history of digital marketing. Instead it focuses on real life practical ideas you can apply today.

In this book you will find out to apply these forms of marketing to your business on a small budget:

- Your website
- Search Engine Marketing (SEO & PPC)
- Permission based email marketing
- Sponsoring events
- Online PR and reputation management
- Thought leadership
- Community building
- Earned and paid social media
- Word of mouth marketing
- Content creation and blogging
- Video content
- Display/banner ads (incl. remarketing)

I would give one note of caution. Not every channel will be suitable for you, so it is important you don't spread yourself too thin trying to do them all.

How this book is structured

The content in the book has been taken from my small business marketing blog www.marketingnerd.co.uk. The ideas presented always keep in mind the common financial, time and knowledge limitations that face small marketing departments and small businesses.

The sections have been categorised by theme, but I have avoided creating any artificial narrative. This means you can dip in and out as you require rather than having to approach it like a novel.

A little bit about me before we delve in

I have a serious passion for anything marketing related, both academically and professionally. I find it hard to switch off in terms of thinking of new ideas or analysing other company's marketing collateral (e.g. a magazine advert, a TV slot, a sponsorship

deal, a press release, a blog post etc.). I am always looking for ideas or critiquing something in my head, be it positive or negative.

I started writing my www.marketingnerd.co.uk blog as a way of expressing my thoughts and opinions on marketing, and in response to the number of theoretical blogs out there which presume unlimited resources.

With all that out of the way, let's get started...

Your customers

Let's start with your most important asset; your customers! Use digital marketing to boost customer value and to reduce churn.

Creating a user onboarding strategy

Successful customers stay longer, spend more and generate positive word of mouth. They are also much less of a drain on your resources.

Your aim should be to plan the easiest route from discovery to becoming successful, removing roadblocks and providing timely positive encouragement.

User onboarding is a process for increasing the likelihood new users become successful when adopting your product. In this post I will give you the framework for creating your own user onboarding strategy.

Why does it matter?

A poor onboarding experience makes every part of your company work harder unnecessarily:

1. Your support team has to spend more time answering basic product queries or misunderstandings, slowing down their response times.
2. Your marketing team have to spend more acquiring new customers to prevent churn outstripping growth.
3. Your developers have to fight fires rather than having the time to develop a cohesive platform

Creating a cohesive strategy

The first stage is to audit your existing collateral. What is their purpose and how successful are they? There is a good chance you already have elements of user onboarding dotted around.

- Customer lifecycle emails e.g. Welcome email, renewal reminder
- Basic setup manual
- Customer feedback form
- Support database

Your objective at this stage is to identify how well they are doing their job and where are the gaps? There are five stages to consider when putting together your user boarding strategy.

- **Introduction to product:** Align you product with their success
- **Sign up process:** Remove friction and simplify
- **First use of product:** Guide them to an important quick win for a positive first step
- **Recurring use of product:** Give them the tools and ideas to become successful
- **Advanced use of product:** Prompt and nudge to turn regular use in to a habit

I would recommend getting help from people you know, but who do not have the same intimate levels of knowledge about your website as you do.

This fresh perspective will help you to see how new prospects interact with your product, from website to usage, highlighting road blocks and points of friction.

Ask them to make notes at each stage of how easy it was to:

- a) Progress along the conversion funnel
- b) Login
- c) Use your product

Once you have created a list of touch points and gaps in your information, you can start developing ideas to increase the likelihood of users' success.

Getting started

Here are some ideas for each of those stages to help get you started.

Sign up process: Remove friction and simplify

- Remove friction and simplify any sign up page to just require username/ password. Do you really need to know where they live at this stage? Get that information later.
- Don't require a new user to have to get their password from their email account. Allow provisional access until it is confirmed.

First use of product: Guide them to an important quick win for a positive first step

- Link to an in depth, glossy "How to use" PDF guide from your welcome email
- Walk through of account when a user signs in for first time
- Walk through of important actions within account– get them to complete actions instead of descriptive tool tips – teach through action rather than memorisation
- Account set up progress bar, highlighting which steps already completed (Endowed progress effect)

Recurring use of product: Give them the tools and ideas to become successful

- Video guides on specific actions
- Create a checklist for them to tick off

Advanced use of product: Prompt and nudge to turn regular use in to a habit

- Lifecycle emails based on event and time triggers
- Feature road map and highlight which of them came from customer suggestions

[User onboarding is a really useful framework](#)

A lot of this really falls under common sense, but how much of this do you actually do? User onboarding provides a systematic framework for identifying each stage along a user's journey with your product, and then working out how to increase success.

Do your customers want to have a conversation with you?

I am quite an avid reader of marketing magazines and blogs. This means I find myself reading a lot of articles that cover marketing from a theoretical, best practice angle as well as finding out what large brands (with huge resources) either attempt or our planning.

A lot of these ideas tend to be around the notion of having a “conversation” with your target audience, rather than the “old fashioned” way of talking at them

One way marketing is so last century!?

Examples of the traditional model include TV, radio, press releases and magazine adverts (essentially what we categorise as being “above the line”). The most common criticism of these forms of marketing is how one-way they are; they don’t build a two way conversation which means they are not building a relationship.

The current thinking is that brands should be forming “genuine” relationships with customers that work both ways. Social media has certainly contributed to this way of thinking, but there are also other advances such as re-targeting and behavioural analysis that are helping marketers build personalised experiences for their customers.

In my opinion, personalisation is absolutely the future for consumer brands and although it is largely the preserve of big companies, the technology will become more prevalent and affordable for small companies, it always does.

Personalisation is not a conversation However, personalisation is not the same as having a conversation. It is still automated, based on limited, pre-conceived collateral and completely passive.

A conversation requires effort on the part of a customer, and that is why they are so difficult for brands to actually pull off. Ignoring any customer support issues, how many times have you actively engaged with a brand?

The marketing landscape is littered with the corpses of conversational campaigns, as brands realise no one actually wants to have one with them.

So many brands try to start a conversation that no-one cares about or barges in to an existing topic where they are not welcome or don't really understand.

A worthwhile investment?

Creating a conversational marketing campaign requires a lot of work and time investment to plan, execute and maintain.

The question is, is it worth it? If a brand is successful then of course the answer is 'Yes!' However, I would strongly argue the odds are very much against you and the idea that traditional one-way forms of communication no longer work is utter nonsense.

Take Coca-Cola's recent campaign putting names on their cans. People are sharing their purchases, but they are talking to genuine friends, they aren't having a conversation with Coke about it.

And this is the real goal, it's not about having a conversation, it is about becoming part of the conversation in a contextually relevant way.

Treating your customer like fried gold

Keeping your brand fans happy should be right of the top of your thoughts, and ideally a specified aspect of your marketing plan with clear actions and goals.

I would argue they will refer more new business to you than any advertising campaign you put together. So put in as much time and investment in cultivating them as you would planning a promotion.

Start a conversation with them

Brand fans love nothing more feeling they have a deeper relationship with a brand than other customers. You can help reinforce this by getting in touch via social media and asking them a question.

This could be for an update based on a previous conversation or a simple “How are you?” Keep it friendly and chatty with no sales overtones.

Send them something nice

Everyone likes a gift, and they don't have to be expensive to be enjoyed or highly thought of. How about a Blue Peter style badge using your logo and “Limited edition” on a card?

Alternatively why not send a hamper of free products from your collection and a handwritten thank you note?

Say thank you

If they publicly recommend you or say anything positive always make sure you say thank you. This positive reinforcement will motivate them to continue or even do it more.

Faster than normal support

The idea that you may speed up support for a customer may seem strange, but if you work on a first come first serve basis, I'd recommend jumping your brand fans to the front of the queue.

The more times they experience less than perfect service, the more the illusion of you being perfect gets chipped away. Don't let that happen!

Make them a big deal

If they write or even better, create something that you think is funny or relevant, share it with the rest of your customers/ followers via social media, your blog or newsletter.

Another idea is to create a customer spotlight where you showcase them and recognise them in a way that fits your brand. E.g. if you are an IT software firm, create an expert's section with profile and a "Pro" badge.

Be where they are

Don't make them work for anything. Make it easy for your brand fans to find you and engage with you by going to them. If they are on Facebook, then so should you. If they are using Pinterest, then create an account and let them know about it etc.

Give them previews

If you launch new products or services on a regular basis, you can use your brand fans as testers. This will achieve two goals; firstly you get useful feedback before launch to improve your product, and secondly you make them feel special and a part of the company's success.

40 ways you can reward your brand fans

Brand fans are the lifeblood of any business. They refer new customers, leave positive reviews online and even defend you from criticism. They also buy more frequently, stay longer and buy more expensive versions of your product.

The odd thing is, as marketers we often take them for granted and treat them the same as any other customer or prospect.

The best customer marketers know to treat this special group like a slice of fried gold. This isn't done through one off or ad hoc activities, but rather a planned strategy with timed and targeted activities.

Here are 40 ideas you can implement right now to reward your brand fans and make them love you even more.

As I mentioned above, if you approach these as one-offs they will be welcomed warmly, but real success will come from an on-going program that rewards and cultivates.

1. Give them an exclusive price discount on new purchases
- 2.... And/ or on their renewals
3. Send a physical package of branded presents in the post e.g. a badge, stickers, USB memory stick...
4. Ask them to beta test upcoming products and features
5. Give them early access to a new product before anyone else
6. Create a mini-conference just for them
7. Run a series of invite only webinars
8. Ask them for a quote for your website/ literature

9. Turn them into a case study
10. Commission them to create something for you
11. Set-up a club for them to join
- 12.... or if you already have one, add a special invite only tier
13. Ask them a questions directly via Twitter (they will love the personal touch)
14. Gamify their experience and create a publicly viewable leader board
- 15.... and let them cash in those points for rewards
16. Access to value-added content only they can get hold of
17. Send a simple thank-you letter/ email
18. An awesome competition with genuinely great prizes
- 19 .Share their work or ideas via social media
20. Sponsor an event, club or charity they are involved with
21. Give mod access on your forum
22. Create a special badge for their account profile
23. Send a Christmas card
24. Interview them for your blog
25. Invite them in and show them around your office
26. Run a training day on how to use your products/ services
27. Have a social event for a select group at a bar
28. Run a round table discussion on what they'd like to see from you
29. Use a tiered badge system for them to put on their website e.g. "Supplier", "Partner" etc.
30. Create a performance report and send it as a nice surprise
31. Share some original research findings that gives them new insight

32. Use them in an advert
33. Set up a monthly/ annual award e.g. Website of the month
34. Coupon codes to share with their friends and family
35. Give them a service free others have pay for
36. Prioritise their support tickets and phone calls
37. Send a birthday card/ e-card
38. Put a customer gallery on your website
39. Include them in a press release along with a quote
40. Create a series of discounts for 3rd party businesses that compliment your product/ services and/ or you know your brand fans will find useful

Not all of these are going to be suitable for every business, but if you pick out a handful and use them, your brand fans will love you for it, and you should see their numbers swell with new fans as well.

Do your customers want to have a conversation with you?

An interesting piece of research passed by my desk which claimed 10 – 20% of my industry's customers don't know who their supplier is. They are so disconnected from their supplier that they don't care, and that means they have no brand recall.

This is exactly the same for me with my gas supplier – I can't tell you who they are. This should be the stuff of nightmares for any marketer!

This occurs in markets where there is no product differentiation (e.g. electricity is the same whoever I buy it from), or where it is perceived to be the same (like my own industry – where in fact there are huge differences).

In this post I will show you how you can become more than just another commodity for your customers.

The end goal is to create a connection between your brand and your customers; in essence make them care! Let's look at how you can take that bit of theory and actually do it.

Differentiate

If your products are the same as your competitors' then you need to add features, services or benefits that differentiate you and provide additional benefits for your customers.

This could be through:

- Technology e.g. a management app
- Service e.g. 24x7 phone support, same day delivery, easy self-management
- Customer engagement e.g. using customer's faces on your website, prominent customer reviews, social activity
- Your brand voice e.g. playful and cheeky
- Product features e.g. expanded colour range
- Giving away a freebie e.g. get a £50 M&S voucher

Here is how British Gas try to differentiate their gas product:

Here are some of the benefits to being a British Gas customer:

 Award winning service British Gas was named the winner of the 'Best Utility Supplier' in the 2013 IMRG eCommerce awards for excellence, the UK's industry association for online retail.	 Free smartphone App It's simple to submit your meter readings, view your balance, track your energy usage, book an engineer visit and track the status of your appointment.	 Direct Debit Dashboard You can check the status of your plan, request a refund if you're in credit and change your payments.	 Save with EnergySmart™ Add EnergySmart™ and save up to £125* with accurate monthly billing.
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Stay in contact – Push & Pull

Push your message

Staying in contact is much more than sending a boring PR style email every month. In fact, if that is all you do, chances are you'll just end up in the spam folder.

Email marketing is actually one of the most creative ways you can stay in touch with your customers. Costa Coffee do a great job with their monthly emails.

You wouldn't think there would be much for them to say each month, but they always look great and have some nice snippets of information. They almost gamify my buying coffee by reminding me about how many points I have and what that would let me get for free right now.

#perfectcoffee

We want to see your idea of a perfect Costa coffee. Upload snaps to Facebook or Twitter with **#perfectcoffee** and some lucky ones will get Costa goodies!

Your points*

50

Keep saving for a Cappuccino

Win 10,000 points

Have a go at our Belgian Chocolate Jaffa question for a chance to win 10,000 Coffee Club points**!

Play now

Log on to your account

*Correct as of 11th April 2014

Pull your audience to you

The way you stay in contact with your audience is by adding value. This way, not only do you push your message to your target audience, you can pull them to you as well. As well as welcoming communications from you, they will actively seek you out.

Great content marketing such as blogging, competitions, research, free resources/tools etc. will bring people to you again and again.

Red Bull is more than just another energy drink, thanks to very specific sponsorship (adrenalin sports) and world-class content creation. Obviously Red Bull have a huge marketing budget, but you can apply the same model to any business.

Brand personality: Get one!

If you compete in an industry where all the suppliers either provide the same product/service, or are perceived to do so, the big challenge is how to compete on more than just price.

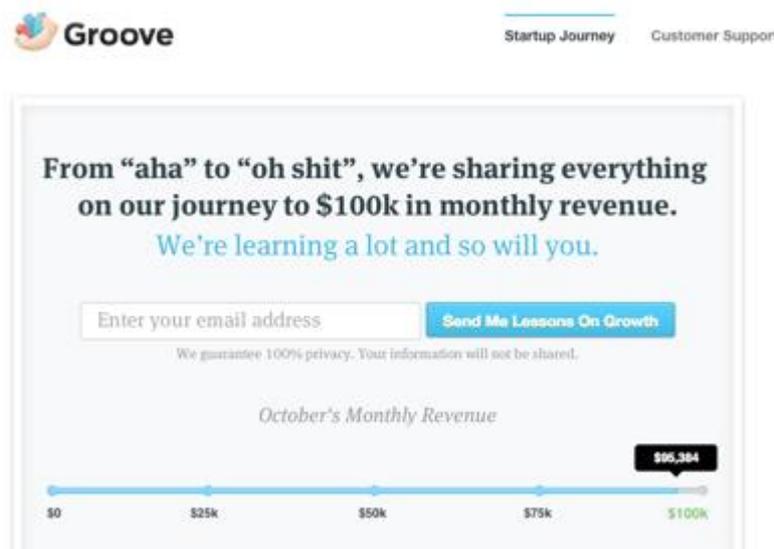
If you look at examples such as the mobile phone operators and utility providers they are all concentrating their marketing on brand messages first, product second.

You never see O2 use a telephone mast to advertise their network. They associate themselves with the opportunities their network provides you with to seek out fun, new opportunities. They enable you to have a fun time.

Find a message that resonates with your target audience that goes beyond simple price and service messages, and associates a positive emotion with your product. What do you enable your customers to do?

Help desk software provider Groove could just let you 'support your customers', but instead they give you the tools to *"Delight your online customers with awesome, personal support."*

They also have an awesome blog that acts as their diary on their way to earning \$100,000 revenue per month. This quirky and open take on a blog fits in with their general approach, and sets them apart from their larger faceless competitors.



You'll see they are also using their blog as a lead generator.

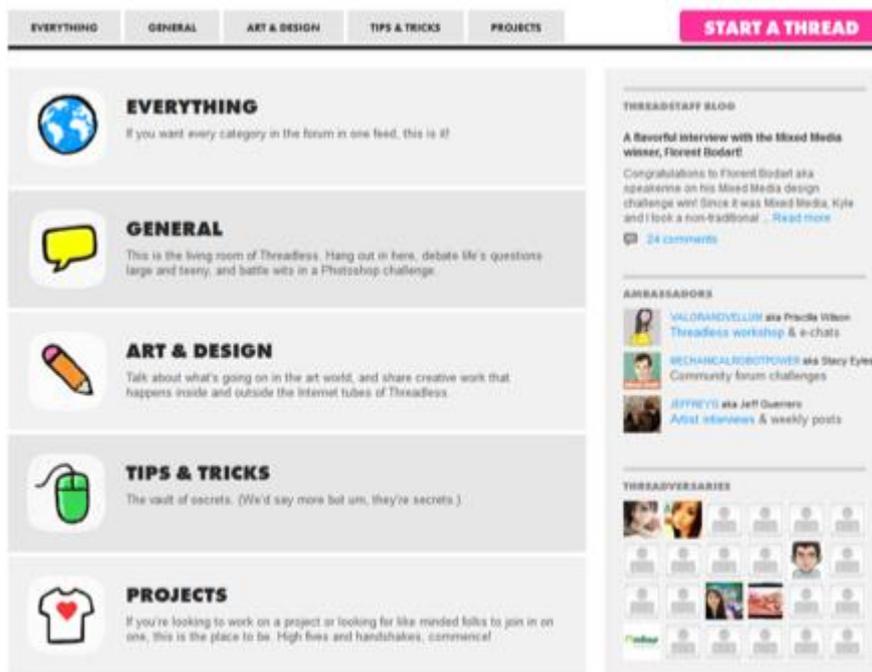
Create a community around your brand

A more resource heavy option, but the benefits of developing a community around our brand include increased customer engagement, loyalty and brand affinity as well as increased word of mouth marketing.

The easiest way to do this is through a forum on your website that goes beyond just your products and services. There are plenty of plug and play forum software to choose from, the most popular being bbPress for WordPress or phpBB.

They can easily descend into disgruntled customers complaining or people falling out, so they need clear rules and close monitoring. On the plus side, if you keep people focused on positive discussions about areas related to your industry, you can become a destination website.

T-shirt brand Threadless has forums for their community to discuss a wide range of design and artistic topics:



If you have the desire to push it further, you can explore creating a more in depth social experience with social network style functionality. Off the shelf tools such as BuddyPress or UserPro (both for WordPress) are a great place to get started.

And finally... talk confidently and with purpose!

Be confident in your successes, whether they are big or small. Confidence breeds confidence, so never be shy to retweet a positive tweet, put a great review on your website or direct traffic to happy customer testimonials.



The example above is taken from Quick Sprout. Also, take a look at the way Apple launch any new feature. Small advancements are pitched as giant leaps forward, even if competitors already have them.

Your most important piece of marketing: The welcome email

Acquiring a customer is only the first step along what you want to be a very long journey together. The most successful companies know they cannot take customers for granted. They also know that customers never stop developing their opinion of a company, be it good or bad, and first post-purchase impressions are vital.

If you ask for customers to sign-up to an account as part of their purchase, this is where your welcome email comes in.

Your welcome email must be much more than just a simple hello or confirmation of the order. This is your customer's first window into your business and the product they have bought, so it has to be a good one.

From how it looks, to what it says and what it asks them to do, it all needs a lot of thought and attention to ensure your customers get off on the right foot and instantly develop a positive opinion of your business.

Personalise

Use the information you captured at the sign-up stage to personalise their welcome email. Personalised emails have been proven to be more effective than generic emails.

Even something as simple as inserting their name is an effective tool for increasing click through rates.

Consistent branding

Your welcome email must be consistent with your brand. The colour scheme, tone of voice and depth of copy must reflect the brand they bought from perfectly.

This may seem obvious, but I have seen countless welcome emails that use out of date branding or do not fit in with the pre-sales brand their website uses.

What should they do next?

The biggest question a welcome email should answer is “What do I do next?” Is it log-in, activate something, phone you...?

Put this information prominently at the top of your welcome email like a call to action button on your website, and don't bury it in paragraphs worth of text.

Educate them on how to use the product

The more your customer uses your product, the more likely they are to stay with you and buy more.

Obviously your welcome email should provide all the information they need to log-in, but it should also contain information on how to get started with your control panel and product.

You don't need to put all the information in to the email, but you should link to guides/resources that provide step by step information on using their product.

Keep it short and sweet

You don't need to give every morsel of information about your company and products at this stage, and in fact you shouldn't.

No one wants to read an essay upon signing up, and it makes your product look overly complicated.

Let your customers decide which information they want to read more about by linking to guide based pages on your website/ control panel, giving them control over what they read more about and when.

Cross-sell, but don't up-sell

The period after an initial purchase is a great time to cross-sell complimentary add-ons and products a customer can benefit from associated with their product.

Don't push this too hard and make it feel like it is informational and supportive rather than hard sales.

I personally would not attempt an up-sell at this stage, it instantly makes their product feel inferior. I'd save that for renewal reminders.

Encourage referrals

One thing Dropbox do very well is incentivise word of mouth through the promise of more free storage space.

This starts instantly with their welcome email and a link to their storage bonus page with instructions on how to claim it by advertising them via social media or referring a friend. You can do the same!

Optimise for mobile

41% of email is now opened on a mobile device, and that figure is growing. When designing any email, not just your welcome email, ensure your subject line is written for the shorter subject lines you get

How to use order confirmation emails to sell more

Research has shown that the probability of selling something to a prospect is only about 5-20%, while the probability of selling something to an existing customer is 60-70% ([source](#)).

What if you were to take your traditional order confirmation (simply letting customers know the order has been placed successfully) and use it as an opportunity to encourage an already extremely warm lead to buy more?

In this post I will show you how to use your order confirmation email to sell more products/services.

Reduce purchase anxiety

Purchase anxiety typically happened when someone buys a product that is a little too expensive for them or they spend more than they normally do.

The danger here is they instantly get nervous, want to back track and then try to cancel and get a refund.

To combat this continue marketing to them and reinforce their belief they just made the right decision. Include testimonials, reviews/ratings, awards, trust marks etc. in the design of the email.

Cross-sell added value services

Do you sell any complimentary services that instantly support their purchase? A great example I received was from a hotel that linked to services such as car hire, tourist excursions, theatre tickets etc. for that city in the booking confirmation email.

The important point here is to compliment the product, not replace it. Don't try to get them to upgrade at this stage, you'll run the risk of undermining what they just bought.

Encourage a referral

Having literally just bought from you, now is the time to trade on their positive sentiment and try for a referral.

Do they know anyone else who might want your services? Set up an easy 'Click to recommend us' link within the order confirmation email.

Give them a discount on their next purchase

I wouldn't go too crazy with this one, maybe just a small amount like 10% when they spend £X to act as a nudge and to get them coming back. I would also time limit the discount to create a sense of urgency.

Get actionable data

If you want to gather feedback on how people find using your website and order process, this is the perfect time to ask!

The whole experience is fresh in their mind, and with a little incentive (e.g. 10% off next order) a lot will be willing to share their experiences via a short survey.

How to run a successful customer survey

I am a big fan of surveys. Too often marketers try to use abstract data or personal opinion to define their customers and work out what they want.

The simplest and most effective method is to ask them.

A well designed survey will help you to clearly define who your customers are, what they like about you, what they think you could improve, as well as offering great product/ service ideas for the future.

Here we will look at the software you can use to run your survey and capture the data, the survey structure and questions formats you should be using, questions for you to consider, and finally some general survey “do’s and don’ts”.

Defining the survey’s purpose

The first question to ask yourself should be “What information do I want about my customers?” i.e. what is the purpose of your survey? Is it to find out who they are (e.g. demographics), their likes and interests, what motivates them to buy, what they like/ dislike about you, their opinions on a specific product...etc.?

Once you have a clear idea on the survey’s purpose you’ll find thinking of what questions to ask comes a lot easier to you.

- Do you want to find out about:
- Your customers demographic make up
- Your place in the market
- How customers perceive your brand
- Your customer service
- How many customers use your competitors as well
- How people heard about you
- Which features are most important to them
- How you could improve
- etc.

Survey software

There are two ways you can go with the survey software, hosted or self-hosted. Hosted software is easier to set up and often comes with point and click branding tools, however they can look amateurish and sit on another company's domain name.

A self-hosted survey allows for much greater customisation and branding, plus it is hosted on your domain name. However they do require good levels of design knowledge to implement.

The three survey software solutions I have used and can judge based on experience are:

Limesurvey: A self-hosted solution which does require extensive design work to brand it as your own. The management tools are a little clunky and it is easier to export the results to MS Excel to analyse.

Survey Monkey & Zoomerang: Although these two hosted solutions do not have anywhere near the customisation options of LimeSurvey, they are far easier to set up and get running. Using a point and click approach, it feels like using desktop software and is a good choice for non-designers. If you don't have in-house designers, I'd recommend this option, and of the two, I'd lean towards survey monkey.

Survey format & question types

Your survey has to strike a balance between capturing enough usable data to be worthwhile and not having so many questions people don't complete it. Ask yourself what you will do with the information from each question.

If you cannot give yourself a satisfactory answer, leave it out. There are no hard fast rules about survey length, however I tend to try and keep it around the 10 – 15 question mark.

The two broad types of questions found in surveys are called “open” and “closed”. Open questions allow the participant to respond using any answer they see fit, usually in a text input field. An example would be “Do you have any ideas how we can improve our products?”

A closed question gives the participant a limited choice of answers to pick from, and these can be a radio button, a tick box or a drop down menu. Here is a [good list of different question types](#).

Open questions allow for any type of answer but are time consuming to analyse, and whilst closed questions only offer predetermined answers, they are very easy to analyse.

I would recommend using primarily closed questions, with one or two open questions added to capture data for anything you haven’t thought of.

The way you ask a question and the options you make available can greatly influence the data you receive.

Here are some easy traps to fall into you should avoid:

- Double barrelled questions: e.g.” How useful do you find Widget Inc’s Online Support Database and the email support centre?”
- Biased questions: “What did you like about our product?” presumes they liked it.
- Forcing an answer: For example demanding an answer to a closed questions such as “How do you rate our customer support?” without giving the option of “I haven’t used it”
- Weighting the responses: For example, if the choices they have are “Excellent, Very good, Good, Poor”, three of the four answers are positive which will naturally skew the results in that favour.
- Using scale of 1-10: How much better is a 7 over a 6? If you don’t need 10 options, stick with 5 and put a value with each of them e.g. “Very Good, Good, OK, Poor, Very Poor”.

Read more about the science behind setting questions here www.greatbrook.com/survey_question.htm

Getting customers to participate

To get your customers to take part in your survey, they must first know it exists. Your customer marketing communications (newsletter, control panel alert, specific email etc.) are perfect methods to drive them to your survey.

A few of your customers will give feedback because they have strong opinions (good and bad) or they have specific areas they want to feedback on, but I would expect the majority won't take part unless you provide an incentive.

Entering all completed survey forms in to a prize draw to win a decent value prize is a tried and tested approach to boost response rates.

General dos and don'ts

Here are some quick points to help get the most out of your survey:

- Plan in advance what you will do with the data from each question. This helps trim out any fat.
- Explain the survey's purpose at the start.
- Put your questions in a logical order.
- Keep scale ratings consistent throughout e.g. 1 = poor in every question.
- Don't ask people to think back over extended time periods, it is unrealistic to expect accurate answers.
- Don't put "don't know" or "NA" as an option in middle (e.g. 3 of 6), it will make statistical analysis a nightmare. Put it as a separate option at the end.
- Pre-test your survey, either within the business or a small sample of customers.
- Give participants the ability to remain anonymous.

Hopefully this should have given you some ideas or pointed you in the right direction for your customer survey.

Reactivating churned customers

Customers come and go, that is the nature of any business. However, that doesn't mean you have to accept that all those that have left are gone forever.

By implementing a series of key customer strategies, you can reduce the number leaving and reactivate more of those that have already left.

First steps...

The first step is to define what makes a dead customer from your perspective. Is it someone who hasn't bought from you in over 1,3,6 or 12 months, someone who hasn't logged in in a certain number of days, weeks or months etc.? This will inform you of who sits within the audience segment you want to target.

Additionally, using RFM, what characteristics do churning customers share? For example, is it a group that spends 30% less month on month relative to your customer population? Once you know this you can pick out the customers who have fallen into that cycle.

Finally, be clear with what you want them to do. Is it to login, start another trial, buy one or more products...? This will then dictate how you approach them and what you ask them to do. You'll also be able to benchmark success for future campaigns.

Once you know who they are and what you want them to do, you can start to do something about it!

Apply an onboarding strategy

User onboarding is the idea that successful customers are happy customers, and they stay with you longer and spend more.

In a nutshell, your challenge is to do everything you can to make it as easy as possible for your customers to get set up and use your product, and then become a success.

Popular ways of doing this include:

- Welcome email with login link and steps for getting started
- Set-up checklist in their control panel that shows progress
- An animated walk through when they log-in for the first time
- A user guide/manual

Target new, inactive signups

Email users who haven't logged in again or bought anything within 24 hours of signing up. The longer someone leaves it to buy, the less likely they are to do so.

If they sign up and haven't logged in within 3 days email them asking if they need any help. If they have purchased but haven't started using your service within 3 days, email them with links to support articles or getting started guides/videos.

Customer satisfaction survey

Use NPS surveys to flag customers who are unhappy, and trend your general customer satisfaction performance.

Use this data to contact customers who fall into the detractor pot find out how you can help. This will push them in to the promoter group almost every time, or at least the passive.

Stop customers falling down the RFM table

I know from personal experience that Ikea apply this strategy (read more about that here). If you have customers dropping out of your top group (1,1,1) keep their buying habits going with targeted offers based on their previous purchases.

Despite all of this, you will always lose customers. Here are some ideas to help win them back...

Reactivating dead customers

There are a couple of steps you need to take before you get started communicating with your churned segment:

1. Make sure you are using their history to inform all your marketing. Using historical transactional and behavioural data will result in far more effective marketing than one size fits all messages/offers.
2. Create a control group to measure how successful your actions are. Take a sample of 10% and don't send them any marketing. You can then compare this group with your action group to see if there is any difference.

Go back to square one and educate them

Stop thinking of these people as your customers. Start treating them in the same way you do with cold prospects. In all your marketing, remind them of all the key USPs and UVPs that attracted them in the first place.

A percentage of your customers may have churned because they didn't understand how to successfully use your product or how it can benefit them.

Creating educational content on how to become successful in their field (using your product naturally) will help draw people back.

Bribe them, but not too often

Special offers are always the most effective, the more aggressive the better. You are trying to change their behaviour so it has to be worth their while.

Go beyond a one off discount, and create an offer that requires repeat consumption to start building a habit.

Snack company Graze target me regularly with various offers to reactivate me. These range from a free box, discounted multiple boxes or my 2nd and 4th box free of a 5 box order.

However, the trap they have fallen into is sending me offers too regularly and I now expect them and in fact wait for them.

Remarketing through Google AdWords

You don't have to use Google AdWords to bid on keywords or attract new visitors. You can also show adverts on websites to previous visitors and customers as they move around the internet.

I would strongly recommend you set up a Google AdWords account and remarketing tracking on your website.

Using their remarketing service you can show tailored messages to this specific audience. e.g. "Come back and get X% off!" or "New features added".

SEO & content marketing

Ever evolving, SEO is no longer just about how many links you can get. In this section I will show you how to optimise your website and get the right links from the right people.

A quick note about content marketing

Content marketing has very quickly risen to the top of many marketing department's to do list as a standalone tactic i.e. creating a one-off piece of content.

This is a huge mistake, and a lot of companies will be left scratching their head why it doesn't seem to be working for them.

The most common mistakes I see are companies creating content marketing that is:

- About a topic not related to their field
- Poorly designed
- Not adding any value for the reader
- Unoriginal and has been done many times before
- Superficial with no substance

The task of creating content for marketing purposes can easily fall in to the trap of becoming a paper exercise to tick some boxes, because that is what seems to be in fashion right now.

The first step to creating great content marketing is for it to come from a place of truth. That sounds pretty grandiose, but by that I mean it makes sense your company is creating it.

The other characteristics of great content marketing are pretty much the opposite of the list above. These being:

- Looks great
- Adds value for the reader
- Original and has not been done many times before
- Has substance

Content marketing also has to be part of a story you want to tell. Ad-hoc, standalone content marketing is rarely successful, but those that help to tell a bigger picture are far more often picked up by the target audience.

Build content marketing in to your marketing strategy. Content marketing itself is not a strategy, it is a tactic to help achieve a bigger goal.

SEO in the “nofollow” age

Google’s algorithm updates have put a huge dent in the traditional quick win tactics employed by many SEO professionals and agencies.

Google has done a really good job of making it very difficult to game their system by specifically targeting the areas the SEO community had come to rely on to get quick results. In fact a lot of sites are increasingly becoming reluctant to link out to other websites fearing they may be seen as spamming the system.

Obviously this makes like a lot harder, and a lot of SEO blogs and forums are asking the question “Where is the quick fix now?” with no one stepping forward with an answer. A few tactics are currently being bled dry (e.g. guest writing) but that just makes it a matter of time before the Google slap descends on those as well.

So where does that leave website owners who want to build links naturally to rank well in Google, but don’t want to fall foul of Google’s itchy penalty trigger finger?

Before we get in to what you should be doing, let’s start with the areas Google has been looking to penalise.

What has been hit?

With their Penguin update, Google went after what it perceived to be unnatural and manipulative link profiles.

These were links that came from low quality websites, sites not relevant to your niche, paid links, and over optimised anchor text using exact match keywords.

This means SEOs are now scrambling to distance themselves from tactics such as (or at least they should be):

- Buying hundreds of links using the same anchor text
- Links from hundreds of low quality directory sites
- Blog commenting purely for SEO
- Over optimised internal linking (anchor text keywords and too many links)

Google is also clearly looking for where the herd is moving and recently made noises that guest post writing – a current tactic du jour – should use the nofollow attribute in any guest author bio link at the bottom or in the main body.

So where does that leave you?

In terms of link building, the key elements you are looking for are links on relevant, high quality sites that are acquired over time and feature diverse anchor text.

Sounds easy! I'd argue the era of the SEO quick wins is dead. Short term thinking has to give way to long term investment in time and money. This is why there is so much buzz around content marketing right now, it is being seen as the saviour of the SEO industry. And to be frank, it probably is. Read my 6 tips for creating successful content marketing.

In my opinion, the key components of modern SEO are blurring with digital PR and include onsite content, links (the right kind) and social.

On-site content: Your website is still a vital component Google analyses to determine your rankings. And it is one fully under your control which means there are no excuses not to get it right.

I'd recommend reading moz.com's Beginner's guide to SEO for some great advice around this area. In summary, your website content should be based around keyword research and intelligent use of those keywords in your meta data, site navigation and web copy.

Remember, Google has a real downer on over optimised pages so don't use your keywords to the point it looks unnatural.

The right type of links: This is where it starts getting tricky. The focus for modern SEO has to be on high quality and relevant links. 500+ directories just doesn't cut it anymore.

Here are some ideas for you to build links and authority in your niche:

- Create and distribute an infographic – a very popular tactic right now, but effective
- Share original research findings
- Give away something free that is typically paid for in your industry (simple and blunt, but it always works)
- Sponsor local events
- Written or video guides
- Good quality and industry specific directories
- Volunteer an interview for your industry's news outlets

The importance of social signals is a relatively new ingredient to the mix, but an increasingly important one nonetheless.

Social signals are the metrics Google analyses from social networks such as their own Google+, Twitter and Facebook. The theory is, the more shared and discussed some form of content is (likes, shares, +1 etc.) the more relevant it must be.

Unfortunately it is not a simple numbers game where one like = one vote. In fact the extent to which Google uses social signals is largely unknown and despite some experimentation and testing, there is no definitive answer within the community.

What we do know is Google has used social signals to identify new links quickly and new trends.

We also know they are reducing the number of link signals they use to rank websites (as discussed above), plus they are heavily invested in making Google+ at the centre of a lot of what they do.

In terms of practical advice on what to do, as well as having an ongoing presence on these key social networks engaging with people and encouraging them to share, make your content as easy to share as possible with social sharing buttons available on every page.

The sooner you start, the quicker you'll see results

It's easy to take one look at Google's search results page, this advice and decide to go back to bed. I would say to look at all this as a marathon rather than a sprint.

Great content will take time to produce and so will building a social following, but they are worthy investments.

Additionally, you can get cracking with your website right now and you'll see the impact of that within days.

Questions to ask an SEO agency pitching for your business

There are some fantastic SEO agencies out there, in fact the first one I ever worked with in my early 20's felt like part of the company and was so responsive and high quality I got a little spoiled and just presumed everyone was like that. The reality is they aren't.

For every top notch SEO agency, there are a dozen chancers trading on people's lack of knowledge (as is the case with any industry, so don't think I am bad mouthing SEO professionals).

From my own experiences, and reading other people's, here are 8 questions I think you should ask any SEO professional who you have asked to pitch for your business. These will prevent any future stress or strife further down the line.

Please note: These are not in any order of importance and I am going to presume you have already asked about prices by the pitching stage.

Can you show me examples of your previous work?

This includes performance reports and hard data to demonstrate their effectiveness. Even if they can't tell you who their clients are, they should be able to tell you which keywords they worked on and how they improved rankings.

Do I keep any text links you buy on my behalf if we part company?

Some agencies will try to lock you in by renting links on your behalf but maintaining ownership of them. This means if you part company, you'll lose the links as well.

Do I retain copyright on any new content you write for my website?

Using the same principle as above, if they own any new content, they can demand you remove it as well.

What improvements would you make to my home page right now?

A good agency will do their research before they meet you and start making mental notes on how they would improve your one-site SEO.

Can I come to your offices and meet the team?

This obviously depends on how big they claim to be. If you know they are operating out of their bedroom, then this is unfair. If they claim to be a large operation you can see for yourself, and get to meet the team who will work on your account. People will work harder for those they know, so it will benefit you as well.

What is your approach to link building?

If they exclusively buy links, it is your website that will be penalised not theirs. If they are going to create “link bait”, tie them down to exactly what that means and if it is included in the price.

Have you worked in this industry before?

Every industry is different, as are the authoritative websites Google looks to, to gauge quality links. Generic directory submissions are largely a waste of time. You need quality links from your industry related websites; do they know who they are?

How often will I get reports?

Reporting on a keyword’s performance is very easy, so they have no excuse not to do this. Additionally they should be telling you how much traffic you are receiving from your target keywords, and most importantly, sales generated.

A blog can be your best friend, or your worst enemy

The idea of having setting up and writing a blog attracts many businesses every year, only to get burned as the reality of what is involved to maintain it becomes clear.

Blogs take a lot (and I mean a lot) of time and effort to be done well and achieve your goals, but few businesses seem aware this is necessary or are unwilling to do this

A business blog can drive sales and hugely enhance a brand but it can just as easily portray your company as boring and unprofessional. The choice is yours.

The key to a successful business blog strategy is to have one

Personally, I have set up and defined the strategies for two different business blogs, as well as providing a large proportion of the content, and in both instances I have applied the same strategy.

I believe that in order to be successful a business blog has to be useful, interesting, relevant, regularly updated and encourage interaction with the readers. This takes planning and resources (people, time and money), so without these I would recommend blogging isn't for you.

I previously looked at tools and resources out there to teach yourself how to start and write a business blog, and here I am going in to more detail about the importance of planning, resourcing and perseverance.

It doesn't matter what industry your business operates in, the only way you will get people to read your blog and come back for more is if you provide something they want.

This could be guides, tips, something funny... it depends on your target audience, but the general strategy is the same regardless. Be useful, be relevant, be interesting, be up to date.

Update, update, update...

One of the biggest stumbling blocks for business blogs is updating the content frequently. If you can't commit to this I wouldn't have one.

A blog that was last updated 4 months ago makes you look unprofessional and the blog starts having a negative effect on your brand rather than a positive one.

The best way to ensure your blog stays fresh and up to date is to make someone in your business the blog editor and part of their day to day job. If the blog is something to be done in a spare minute, it never will. Who admits to having a spare minute at work?

The MOST important channel?

That last point ties in with a general misconception that a blog does not have to be treated in the same way as other marketing channels, and can be managed on an ad-hoc basis or as an afterthought.

Your blog is your voice, which makes it quite possible THE most important marketing channel you have. It needs to be treated as such. The best business blogs have an editorial plan, take the time to write quality content and have multiple people writing for them sharing their different skill sets and opinions. Some even have full time members of staff just working on the blog.

It may seem so blindingly obvious as to wonder why I am bringing it up, but your choice of content is king. The reason I am bringing it up however, is that so many business blogs think publishing the occasional press release or staff announcement will cut it.

Put yourself in a reader's shoes, why would they want to read that? What they want is content that helps them or makes them smile, and it doesn't matter what your business does, there is always something to say.

Your blog also has to be "on brand", and by this I mean it can't be written in a style that jars against what your business stands for. If you are fun and quirky, so should your blog be as well.

If your brand is B2B and dealing with multi-million pound deals, don't write an article about the "top 5 ways XYZ sucks". That's an extreme example but I think you get my drift.

A blog will convert in to sales

You can still use your blog to sell your good or services (in fact you should), but rather than a cold hard description of a product, talk about how it helped one of your customers and how readers can apply that themselves.

This makes it an interesting and useful read, and they also read how great you are! Conversion Rate Experts have a great example of this here <http://www.conversion-rate-experts.com/daflores-case-study/>

Don't be afraid to stop

Even after all that, if you try out using a blog and you find it is too much for you to manage on a weekly basis, don't be afraid to remove it from your website. It is better to do that than to leave a waste ground of out of date blog posts people will associate with your business.

Businesses doing it well

Here are some great business blogs to draw inspiration from...

- <http://blog.kissmetrics.com>
- <http://www.ducttapemarketing.com/blog/>
- <http://blog.majestic.co.uk/>
- <http://insider.nike.com/uk/>
- <http://googleandyourbusiness.blogspot.co.uk/>

Running a webinar series

Webinars are a great way to engage with your customers on a more personal level, and to cover topics in detail. Here are the lessons I have learned from running various webinars myself.

Have clear objectives

As is the case with any type of marketing activity, your webinar should have a clear purpose and objectives. For example, we had been looking for ways to add value for our customers and provide genuinely useful content they could apply to their business straight away.

This would help us stand out in a very competitive market, add a more personal aspect to our business and to help reduce churn by helping our customers use the products successfully.

Additionally, from the start we took the approach that we wanted to provide real life, practical ideas and advice that all our customers could benefit from. We didn't want to use unrealistic best case scenarios that simply aren't practical without a team of hundreds to support you.

These objectives helped define the webinar structure and shape the script and slides. Thanks to this writing the script and designing the slides was actually quite painless.

Use professional software

After doing some research and looking at the market leading software, and a few open source alternatives, we decided to sign up to Citrix's specialist webinar software "gotowebinar" and I am very pleased we did.

Although it costs £299 per month, the built in tools such as the sign up/ list manager are a major time saver and made managing the whole process very easy.

Be specific

Rather than trying to cover a major topic such as “How to increase your sales”, which can never be done in any worthwhile detail, focus on specific aspects of their business.

For example we chose to launch with a webinar looking at how our customers could increase sales through cross-selling and up-selling.

If you are unsure what to cover, ask your customers what they would like to see. We asked for feedback via our social media channels, and got some great ideas for at least the next 6 webinars.

Make it about them, not you

There are very few occasions where I have sat through a webinar from start to finish.

Reasons include an overly long introduction to the business, products and speakers as well as putting selling products over giving me useful information.

People either won't turn up, or will leave pretty quickly if the webinar is essentially a sales pitch to get more money out of them.

If you want them to stay for the full sessions you are going to have to provide them with useful and compelling content they can't afford to miss.

Don't rush

Due to a mixture of nerves and a natural tendency to talk quickly anyway, we got feedback from participants that we had gone through the slides a bit too quick for them.

Thanks to this feedback we were able to address this for the second webinar, which was a lot more measured in its pacing.

Don't ignore the people who didn't turn up

We found that whilst a number of people who signed up didn't attend the webinar, this was often out of their hands and we would receive emails asking for links to the recorded video afterwards.

Rather than ignore this group of no-shows, send them an email with a link to the video as well.

Post-webinar follow up

Once the webinar is finished, send out a follow up email thanking people for taking part along with links to watch the video or download the slides. If they enjoyed it, they will share it.

Also ask them for feedback on how you could improve the next webinar, we got a lot of useful information from this which we used in the following webinar.

Your website

Your website has a huge influence on how customers perceive your business. Make sure it is positive!

Is it time to get a new website?

Before we delve too deep in to getting the most from your website, we need to be sure aren't you due a new website. Here are seven signs it is time to update your business website...

Your last blog/ news article is from a year ago

Either don't publish any news or make sure you update it at least once a month. There is no middle ground without your website looking stale and forgotten.

Your team photo has more people who have left than are still employed

People come and go from any business that is the nature of employment. However, that doesn't mean you can keep using the picture of someone who left years ago.

Keep your team photos up to date so your clients know who they are dealing with.

You have animated GIF's or a visitor counter in your footer

The height of web cool in the 90's, but long passed in to the category of naff websites. If you have either of these on your website, please delete them today. Seriously!

Your website is 100% text with no images

Image free websites made sense when the majority of your visitors were using dial up, however with broadband you have no excuses not to have an attractive graphic heavy website. People do not want a novel's worth of text to get through, so don't write it and expect them to do so.

Your jobs page has positions that were filled long ago

Nothing screams “unprofessional” more than out of date job adverts. To potential customers it will look like no one wants to work from you, and to job hunters it feels like you are wasting their time.

Your website breaks on large or small screens

A lot of old websites were designed before the introduction of the mega monitors/mobile devices that can show entire pages without any scrolling. Unfortunately, these can also stretch old websites to the point they essentially “snap,” and lose their intended dimensions.

You have your old address/ phone number

You moved offices last year but forgot to update your website. It is quite common for businesses who don't pay much attention to their digital presence to overlook updating the website, but that doesn't make you look any less professional! There are few bigger turnoffs to a potential client than a phone number that's been disconnected or the wrong address being shown.

Preventing feature fatigue

Feature fatigue occurs when a product has so many options and features that the user becomes overwhelmed and can't face using them all. The user will either limit themselves to a small subset of the features, or abandon using the product altogether.

This concept can also be applied to websites, both in terms of design and copy. In this circumstance, feature fatigue can be used to describe a situation where there is so much content to read, and feature tables are so big site visitors can't face reading it all.

The end result is that rather than being impressed by all the amazing features they can use, they leave your website.

When writing a brief for a website, or copy for your pages, it is very easy to fall in to the trap of applying the principle "more is more".

The logical thought process is that you don't want to miss mentioning a feature that could be the reason someone chooses you over a competitor.

However, with this mind set, every feature becomes as important as each other and you have to list them all. Before you know it you have an essay of sales information and a feature comparison table that scrolls all the way down to Australia.

This information overload is too difficult to digest, and most visitors to your website won't even try; they'll go elsewhere.

Some tips to avoid feature fatigue

- The most effective websites give you the most important information to start with, and then let you drill down further if you need to find out more.
- Here are my tips on how to approach writing sales copy and avoid feature fatigue:
- Identify your core features and highlight them first. Be strong and limit yourself to a handful at this stage

- Use bold header titles that describe the benefits so people can just skim the page and still appreciate why they should buy.
- Be concise in describing your product/ service features and their benefits. Short, punchy sentences/ paragraphs are important.
- Use images to show a feature in motion, thus avoiding the need to describe it in text.
- You don't have to close the sale instantly with a dump of information. Give visitors the space to investigate further.
- Start broad and get more specific as the user drills further in to the information. A feature comparison table has its place, just not on the first page. If people want that information, give them the links to read more.

Examples of websites doing it well

To help inspire you, here is a collection of websites who sell a range of technical products, but don't overload prospects with too much information too soon.

Apple

Apple are masters of this. They limit their home page to one hero product, and on the product pages use glossy DG images with snappy paragraph headers, and single paragraphs per feature.

If you want to know the product specifications, that's just one click away as well.

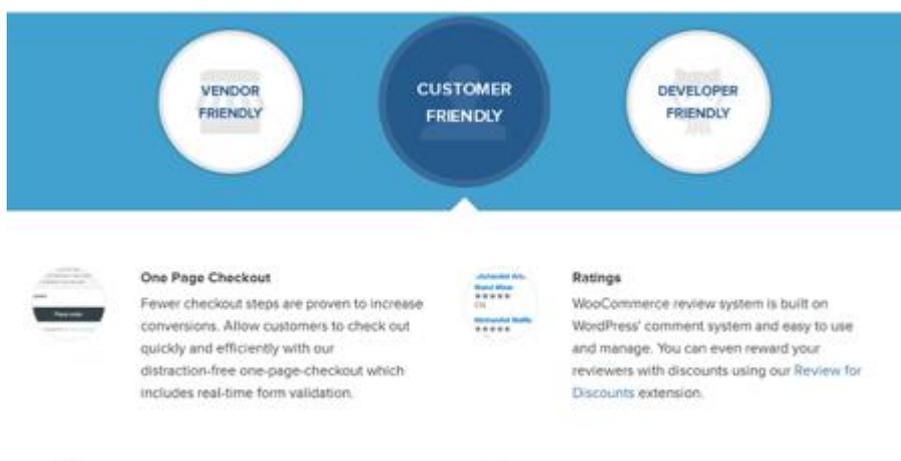


Woothemes

Woothemes are a WordPress theme and plugin development business, and their ecommerce plugin “WooCommerce” has a fantastically easy to read lay out that never overwhelms.

WooCommerce has a huge range of unique features, but they have resisted the temptation to throw them all at you at once.

Instead they have segmented the information in to categories such as “Customer friendly” along with links to drill down further to find out more about a feature.



Wunderlist.com

A fantastic to do list program, Wunderlist uses a single image on its home page to let you interact with each feature in an attractive and innovative manner.



Questions to ask a web designer/agency pitching for your business

Unless you can afford an in-house designer, the likelihood is you will need to outsource building (or refreshing) your website to a web designer/ agency.

Here are the top 7 questions I would ask web designers pitching for your business to make sure you get the best possible person for the job.

Can I see your portfolio?

An established designer should really already have this on their website for you to review. If they don't you must ask for it before going any further with them.

A lot of designers can talk a good game, but have little to back it up. Designers also have a personal style, which may or may not fit in with your brand. Looking over their past work will help to establish if they are right for you.

Who will own the completed work?

This may sound odd, but you must be clear from the start as to who has the copyright on the final product.

Obviously you want this to be you! Additionally, if you are having a brand new website created, make sure the domain name is registered in your name, and not theirs.

Also ask where your website will be hosted and if there are any costs involved with this.

Will you install analytics for me?

Installing analytics is such an easy job they really should include it for you as part of the service.

It will literally take them 5 minutes to do, just make sure it is your account they are using and not their own. If they try to charge you any money, go somewhere else.

Will there be any on-going support?

You are not a designer or a developer, and there will be times over your website's lifetime that problems will arise.

Unless you have a basic understanding of HTML/ CSS and any server side language they use, you'll need help if this does happen.

How many revisions are included?

Unless you are a whizz at writing creative briefs, or you and the designer magically hit it off, there is a good chance the initial designs will not be 100% what you want. In fact it is likely it will take some time to nail the design exactly to how you want it.

Naturally the designer will not want an open ended project, so you'll need to know at what stage they will start charging for more revisions before you get there.

How will I maintain my website?

If you want your website to remain up to date and evolve, you'll need to be able to add new content, pages images and more. How your designer intends to build the website will determine how easy this is for you to do yourself.

If they code it using HTML/ CSS you'll have to go in to the files and edit that yourself, or ask them to do it, which will incur on-going charges.

If they build it using a Content Management System (CMS), you will be able to edit and add content as well as new pages from a web interface, without having to edit any code.

How much will it cost & how long will it take?

These are the two big questions, and once you have given them all the information they need, should be your final questions before proceeding. The whole "how long is a piece of string" is not a valid answer.

You are a business entering in to a commercial agreement, which means there should be a clear start and end date, and an agreed payment schedule.

I would personally ask for a breakdown of each milestone and when they intend to reach them. I would also make payments based on these milestones being completed, or pay in instalments at the start, half way through and once the project is complete.

Social media & digital PR

Very easy to set-up, but not so easy to get right, social media must be a considered choice (rather than a default one) for any business.

The 6 habits of a successful social media manager

Just like any marketing channel, social media requires a certain set of specialist skills to be successful. Knowing how to use the software is one thing, but really understanding how social media fits in the marketing mix, the best ways to use it and how to measure success are another thing altogether (obviously it helps to be interested in social media on a personal level, but again that can be said of any form of marketing).

Here are the 6 habits of a successful social media manager you can take and apply to your marketing efforts today.

Take a holistic view of all your marketing efforts

Whichever social media channels you use, a good social media manager will view them as components of the same strategy. By approaching each social network as a self-contained silo you leave yourself open to inconsistencies, repetition and disjointed campaigns.

The profile images, status updates (message and tone) and shared links/ images should all be consistent with other aspects of the brand and/ or campaign.

Think about what people want before you start

Key three questions every good social media manager asks themselves is:

1. Why will people follow my business?
2. Why will they interact with us?
3. Why will they share us?

If you can answer these questions, you are on your way to a successful social media strategy. The key is to understand it is not about what you want to share and talk about, it is what people want to read and hear about.

Only launch on relevant social networks

Not every social network makes sense for every brand. Too many businesses open accounts with the latest network de jour only to abandon it soon after.

What objectives will that social network fulfil and what content can you create or share on that network that people want?

For example, B2B brands will find it difficult to engage with clients over Twitter and Facebook, but LinkedIn is a great network for sharing high value content and discussing trends in industry groups.

Additionally, a service led brand with no physical presence will find using Instagram a challenge.

Become the voice of the brand, not the person

As a brand's social media manager you are essentially the company's voice, and your words are the businesses words. Everything you say and do should reflect this responsibility.

The personal nature of Twitter, Facebook Google+ et al can draw social media managers in to a false sense of developing relationships at a personal level. This in turn affects tone of voice, grammar and topics of discussion.

Genuinely engage with followers

By 'engage' I mean actually speak with, rather than to your followers. Asking questions is one method, albeit a slightly lazy one. What is better is starting a real conversation that goes back and forth.

The conversation can be over a short period of time, or it can be over the lifetime of that customer.

Measure success without chasing meaningless metrics

The impact of social media on sales and retention may be difficult to quantify fully, but it is not impossible and depending on your objectives, you can completely gauge how successful they are.

Likes, shares, comments, clicks and sales are all easy to track through a mixture of the social network's interface and the likes of Google Analytics' attribution modelling.

Metrics such as the Klout score tell you next to nothing as a business and are only used when the other performance based metrics are poor (in my opinion).

How to get people to interact with you

Creating your social media profiles is the easiest part of any social media strategy. It is often the first and last steps many businesses take along what should be a long road if they are to be used properly.

Getting people to actually engage with you via Twitter, Facebook, Google+ and alike is where the real hard work starts. Here I will show you the reasons why people interact with brands on social media along with specific ideas for you to use.

Why do people follow brands on social media?

Research in to what motivates people to like or follow a brand on social media really highlights how businesses have to play to people's selfish gene.

Very few people will engage with you on social media purely out of love for your brand, they want something out of the relationship that satisfies them.

Exclusive offers and deals are the most popular reason people follow a brand, with interesting content the second most popular amongst non-customers.

A tiny percentage follow a brand for service or product news, but I'd argue that is how most businesses use social media, to their own detriment.

Why do you follow a brand?

	Facebook	Twitter
Special offer/ deals	36.9%	43.5%
Current customer	32.9%	23.5%
Interesting content	18.2%	22.7%
Service, support or product news	5%	3.5%

Clearly sitting back and waiting for people to interact with you is not a strategy. The only way to make social media work for you is to be proactive and play to a person's sense of "what is in it for me?"

Creating the content people really want

The three types of social content that you can create for your followers to engage with are...

- **Rewards:** As discussed above, the biggest motivator for someone to follow your brand is the feeling they will be rewarded for it.
- **Discussion:** There will be a segment of your audience who like to get involved in discussions and express their opinions. Use that.
- **Your original content:** This is by far the most time consuming tactic to increase engagement, but it also have the biggest potential to break out beyond your customer base and reach non-customers who may not have heard of your brand.

Here are some specific ideas for you to use:

Rewards	Discussion	Your original content
Like us/follow us to enter prize draw	Run polls	Blog articles
Joint promotion with another website	Ask open questions to initiate a debate	Free resources (e.g. templates, icons etc.)
Discount codes exclusively for followers	Respond to other people's questions	Interviews

Rewards system, e.g. http://www.punchtab.com/	Use follow up questions/opinions to continue interaction	“Please RT”
Reward active brand fans	Hashtags to organise/track topics	Discount codes for new customers to share
Refer a friend rewards	Use your blog content	Useful 3rd party tools and links

To drive awareness of these activities use an integrated strategy across all your channels including your website, email footers, newsletters, your blog etc.

Measure the right numbers

My advice for any social media marketing is to never chase a number, for the sake of having a large number of followers.

Focus on quality over quantity e.g. it is better to have 100 active followers who have an interest in your product than 1,000 who pay you no attention and have no interest in your product.

The key is to getting started is to be active and not dip in and out once a week or less. It is a daily commitment, especially at the start.

When to say NO to social media

Social media can go one of two ways for a business. It can become part of a thriving community of brand fans and people interested in your products, with you at the centre initiating and responding to discussions.

Alternatively it can become a waste ground of forgotten profiles with digital tumble weeds sweeping through, uncared for and unloved.

Here are 7 reasons your business shouldn't use social media.

No clear strategy or target

If you do not have an overall clear strategy, i.e. "Why am I using this and what do I want to achieve?" then you shouldn't be using it.

Your customers aren't using it

Not every customer type is using social media, or at least not in the context you are used to working with them.

For example, if you offer B2B IT services, very few of your customers will use social media in a business context. Additionally they are unlikely to want to interact with you on their personal accounts.

People expect something for nothing

If you truly want to be successful with social media you typically have to mix competitions and exclusives to draw interest and swell your follower numbers.

You don't have much to say

If you don't have any content to share (e.g. forums, blogs, video, photos or podcasts etc.) or topics to discuss why are people going to follow you?

It is going to be an after thought

If the person managing it is going to re-tweet when they get around to it or allocate a 10 minute slot per week to update the Facebook page, it is not worth your time.

You aren't thinking long term

Social media marketing should be an on-going process with your customers. Expecting people to react to occasional flurries of activity or the odd statement here and there is unrealistic.

But everyone else is doing it!

Don't get sucked into setting up social media profiles simply because "everyone else is doing it". Social media is no different to any other aspect of your business, if it doesn't fit, don't do it.

If you're buying followers, you're doing it wrong

The objective of your Facebook, Twitter or Google Plus profiles in no way should be to simply increase your follower count for the sake of having a high number.

That figure is a largely irrelevant metric to be frank. In fact if you are measuring the success of your social media on figures such as how many followers you have added in a week you're on the wrong track.

There are countless services offering to get you hundreds of followers for a set cost but what value is this actually giving you? It is better to have one follower who interacts with you than 1,000 paid accounts who probably don't even exist as people.

A paid follower will not do any of the following:

- Share your content
- Recommend you
- Ask you questions
- Positively review you
- Buy a product from you
- Recommend how you can be better

And if they are not doing that, what is the point of having them?

There are a lot of pressures within small businesses to report performance to managers or directors and I appreciate follower count is an easy metric for them to understand and for you to increase.

However, your social media strategy must be about engaging with your community in a meaningful way.

This might be through useful content, offering unique insights, exclusive deals, product news, funny stories, customer support, starting discussions and so on.

In fact it can be anything that is relevant to your industry and makes sense with your brand, but it always has to come from the angle of providing value.

The key metrics you should be reporting on to measure your success are not much different to any other form of marketing:

- How many times you were retweeted?
- How many likes and comments were left on your Facebook wall?
- Click through rate from that source
- Actions (e.g. a download), sales and revenue from that source

Engagement and conversions are the figures you should be focusing on and reporting. By all means look at your follower count, but only if you are adding to it because you are engaging with people, not to see how many you bought that during this period.

A useful question to ask yourself when you do anything related to social media is “How does this add value for my followers?” If you can’t answer that positively, then it is probably not worth doing.

Standing out from your competitors

Every business and their uncle have a social media presence, normally on Facebook and Twitter. Few are using them to their full potential and there is little to differentiate one business from another. Here are 7 ideas to help your business stand out.

Genuine one on one contact/ relationships

Many companies promise this, or aspire to it at launch, but few achieve or maintain it.

I'm not suggesting you become firm buddies going out for drinks, but you should know who your power users are and become a little more familiar with them than a standard follower.

For example, Re-tweet their work, comment on anything they have published, ask them direct questions etc.

Aggressive deals you don't offer anywhere else

I'm not talking the odd 5% off here and there; I'm talking major deals on a regular basis that you don't make available to anyone else.

These people are your brand advocates, reward and incentivise their loyalty.

Real discussions, not just statements

People love to express their opinions on subjects they find interesting. With this in mind, kick start real discussions around topics related to your industry that people will enjoy getting involved with.

For example, if you are a sportswear specialist ask your followers what they think are the greatest trainers ever made?

Link to useful 3rd party content

Linking to useful 3rd party content is a good way to get started but this isn't a long term strategy.

It soon becomes tired and a bit predictable. As soon as you can, start mixing in links to your own original content, be it a blog post, new product, exclusive collateral etc.

Put a face to your company

People like dealing with people. If you have someone comfortable with using their picture and name to essentially become the face of the business, then you should use them.

When done well, this tactic breaks down barriers and softens the company's personality. A great example of this in action is www.mashable.com's use of the founder's picture across all social media.

Integrated social marketing

Don't see your social media (Facebook, Twitter, blog, LinkedIn...) as individual silos, you will develop inconsistent tones and branding.

It is also a missed opportunity to use your collateral across all the platforms, increasing their value and likelihood of being read/ used.

Ask your followers what they want from you

Social media is a great opportunity to get instant feedback on both how you are using your social media AND your products and services.

Gathering feedback is great, but if you have no intention of using it, you'll only frustrate your followers in the long term. Make sure you are in a position to action any appropriate suggestions.

If you do make any changes, make sure you communicate this so they can see they are having a real impact.

How to proactively manage your reputation online

We all know people go online to research brands, products and services and how positive sentiment can close a sale and negative sentiment can result in a lost sale.

With such an important role to play in the decision making process, you cannot leave your reputation to chance.

All businesses, regardless of size should be engaged in proactive online reputation management. In this article I will look at how to do this.

Online reviews

People are heavily influenced by the reviews they read, so your first step is to be proactive in ensuring they are as positive as possible. Naturally, positive reviews always come from great products and great service, but that is not always enough. They can often need a nudge from you as well.

If you have shopped with Amazon you'll know you get a follow up email after a purchase asking for you to leave a review on their website.

I would recommend you do this yourself, and ask them to leave a review on your website or ask them to leave a review on any prominent 3rd party review websites that your prospective customers may visit when doing their research.

If you choose to use this tactic, make sure you only ask customers who have had positive experiences with you to ensure you get a good review. Don't forget, Amazon aren't the product manufacturer, they are the shop front and they have so many products to sell they can afford a few negative reviews on a product. You can't!

Influencer outreach

Marketing by association is a tried and tested marketing tactic. When done well a company can benefit from a 3rd party's positive branding as consumers start to associate the two together.

Not every business can get a leading athlete or major brand to team up with, but each industry or niche has contextually relevant and appropriate influencers you can build a relationship with.

Examples include:

- Interviews with industry experts
- Event sponsorship and attendance
- Joint competitions
- They conduct a webinar for your customers

You'll be amazed how these activities can have a huge influence on the way people feel and talk about you.

Show how much your customers love you

Websites can be faceless tools with no sense of size or credibility. An increasing trend amongst many businesses is to showcase the people working there, and how much their customers like them.

If a prospective customer can see that you are used by their peers this makes them more likely to buy from you.

Some ideas to do this include:

- Customer quotes on your home page and product page including the customer's photo or business logo to make it feel more real.
- A section of your website dedicated to positive customer feedback.
- In-depth customer case studies.
- Show positive tweets about you.

Don't just accept negative reviews

If you see a poor review on another website which you know to be factually incorrect or a huge exaggeration, ask for it to be removed.

As long as you give an honest, detailed and reasonable explanation of why the review is not accurate a lot of review websites will remove it (as they should).

Note – Don't demand every review is taken down even if it is accurate, you'll burn any goodwill with the review site and they will start ignoring you.

Using online reviews to increase sales

People are naturally risk averse, and your prospective customers will instinctively look for visual clues on your website to gauge how “safe” your product or service is.

The likelihood of them deciding to buy something from you is often based around the levels of perceived risk they associate with you. This is where positive reviews come in handy.

In this post I will show you the importance of using reviews in your marketing, and how to proactively curate them.

Perceived risk can be defined as...

“Negative or unexpected consequences a consumer fears may occur as a result of making the wrong purchase decision... The greater the perceived risk, the more likely it is that the consumer will seek information about the product and the recommendations and experiences of peers before buying”

Perceived risk can be broadly placed in to the following categories. You should consider how your marketing addresses all of them:

- Performance risk: “Will this perform to the levels I require”
- Financial risk: “Is this worth the money?”
- Security risk: “Will this harm me or pose a danger to me?”
- Psychological risk: “Will this harm my self-esteem or perceptions of self?”
- Social risk: “How will my peers judge me?”
- Or in some cases, all of the above.

One of the most tried and tested methods you can use to reduce their level of perceived risk is to prominently display customer reviews and testimonials on your website (and encourage customers to leave reviews on other websites as well).

Getting your reviews & testimonials

Getting reviews from your customers can be tough, and I have found it is more effective to have a rolling program of collecting reviews rather than attempting to get them on a one off/ ad-hoc basis.

That way you have a steady stream of reviews coming in you to use as and when you need them.

Customer control panel

This obviously presumes your customers have some form of account control panel in the first place, but if you do, make sure you have a page dedicated to them giving you feedback e.g. “Let us know what you think”.

If you don't have a website that uses a control panel, you can create a page on your website with a feedback form – see below.

Your order confirmation page

At the end of an order is a great time to target people for a testimonial. They are generally feeling positive after a successful transaction and you are at the forefront of their mind.

This makes them more likely to be open to taking a minute or two to send feedback.

Social comments

Use any positive tweets or Facebook comments on your website. These are much more difficult for a company to fake, which means they are more credible and carry much more weight.

I would also recommend linking to the tweet to show it is real. See my examples below for this in action.

Feedback form

If you use emails to communicate with your customers, simply add a link to your feedback form (as described above).

This all also applies to any final email you send out at the end of a transaction e.g. a solicitor's "Thanks for using us to move home" email.

Snail mail

If you use the post to communicate with customers, send a form with your final letter and a pre-paid envelope asking for feedback.

You'll be amazed how many people are willing to do it, especially after a positive experience.

Incentives

You can offer an incentive for people to make the effort and increase the number of testimonials you receive. The prize doesn't have to be anything pricey or extravagant to be successful e.g. "Tell us what you think and enter prize draw to win your next meal free".

Additionally, if you want people to leave reviews on other websites, you can also encourage more people to do so by rewarding them.

I have seen one company successfully increase their visibility by offering customers \$5 account credit for every review they leave on industry related review websites.

Where to use your testimonials?

Hopefully this should give you a nice collection of reviews to work with. The next question is what to do with them?

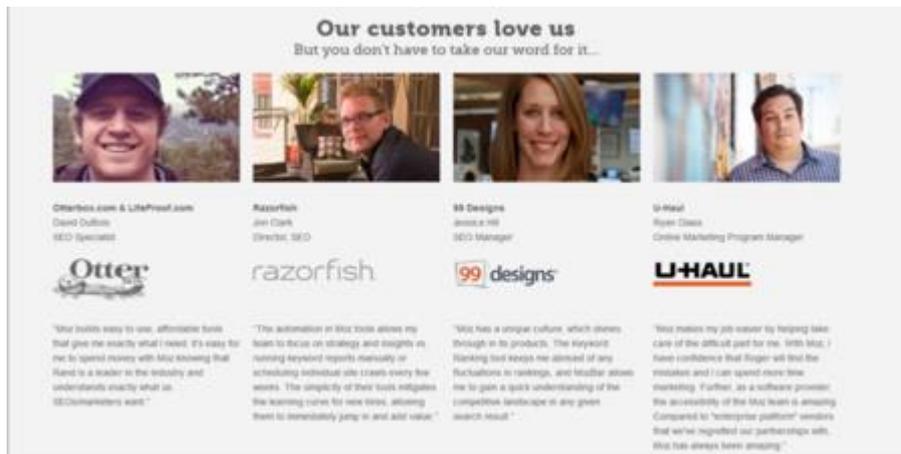
My advice would be to use one or two on pretty much all your customer acquisition marketing material. The more prominent they are, the more impact they are going to have.

Here are some great examples of websites using the positive feedback they have gathered for maximum impact. They work to reduce our levels of perceived risk and drive us on to the next stage of the conversion funnel.

You'll notice a lot are using customers' faces along with the quote. This adds a lot more credibility and weight to them.

Moz.com

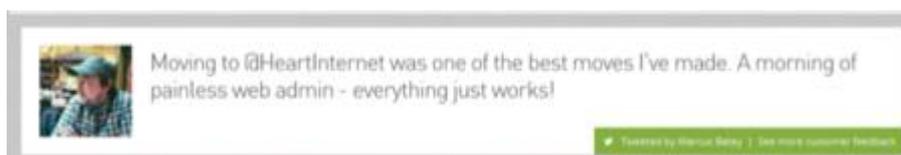
Moz use this section on their home page, just above a call to action button to purchase their services. They use pictures, names, job position and the company to make these as credible as possible.



Heart Internet

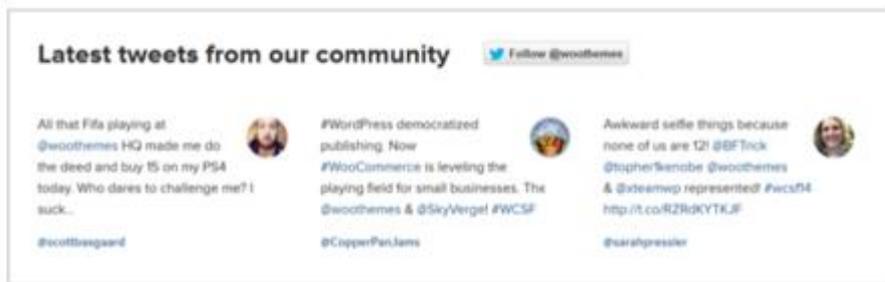
We use rotating positive tweets at my own company on the home page and all the product pages to showcase all the positive feedback we get.

We intentionally chose tweets from accounts that used people's faces as the avatar.



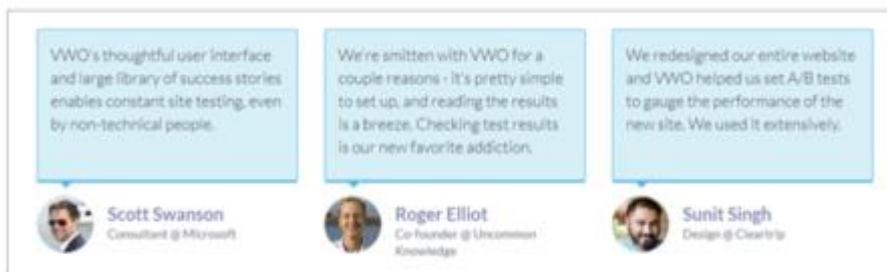
WooThemes

WooThemes have chosen to showcase positive tweets from their customers on their home page as well.



Visual Website Optimizer

VWO uses some prominent names that resonate with their target audience (and their pictures).



PPC & display

Advertising online does not require large budgets anymore. Thanks to easy to use tools within Google AdWords you can target very specific customers and get great results.

How to write a PPC advert that works

Once you get a sense of the structure of a well-designed PPC ad you can use this formula across all your campaigns and accounts, regardless of the product or service you are advertising.

For the purposes of this post I will be using the example of an advert for the search term “red sport shoes” and pretending to be a sport shoe retailer with a sale on.

Keyword at the start of the title

Eye tracking research has shown that searchers do not look at a SERP in detail or in a systematic manner. Rather they scan a page looking for clues as to which result is most relevant to their search.

You literally have a couple of characters to show you are relevant before their eyes go elsewhere. The research showed that PPC ads with the keyword at the start of the title were more likely to be read and clicked on.

You also have the added benefit of the keyword being highlighted bold which will make your advert stand out even more.

A headline grabbing message, ideally with a USP

With so few characters to play with it is in your interests to get to the point ASAP. You also want to make your advert as attractive as possible and make it stand out.

Lead with any promotional message you have (e.g. 25% off) or features that set you apart (e.g. Up to size 16).

Keyword at the start of the main body

Using exactly the same logic as point 1, make sure those flittering eyes know you are relevant instantly.

Using the keyword at the start of the title AND the start of the main body has a clear impact on CTR% thanks to an increase in perceived relevance, and you stand out more with the top two lines highlighted bold.

Create a sense of urgency

You have a great deal on, but they will miss out if they wait too long. That's a very compelling message and one likely to make them act much sooner.

Communicate the benefits

What do you have that the advertisers don't? In this example we are offering a financial incentive through 25% off plus free delivery.

A few other examples you could employ include your geographical location (e.g. "UK call centre"), your support services (e.g. "Award winning support") and the range of choice available (e.g. "All the top brands").

Use the keyword in the visible URL

As long as the domain name you use is the same as the destination you can add anything you want after the forward slash. I always recommend using your keywords to take advantage of the bold text and attract scanning eyes.

How to create an AdWords campaign targeting a local audience

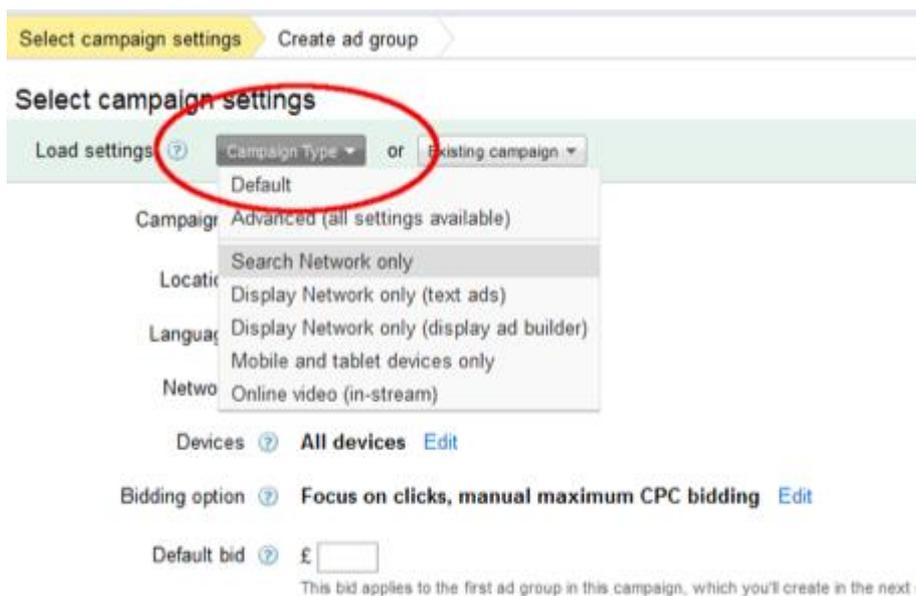
Google AdWords is not the preserve of large companies, or businesses that operate on a national level. If you are a local business, serving a limited geographic location, you can still use Google AdWords to drive traffic and customers, all without breaking the bank.

I will show you how to create a laser targeted Google AdWords campaign only local customers will see.

For the purposes of this post, I am going to take the approach I am a Nottingham based law firm, with multiple offices in the surrounding area, and I want to advertise my Will writing services. I am also going to presume you have an AdWords account set up and ready to go. Let's get started.

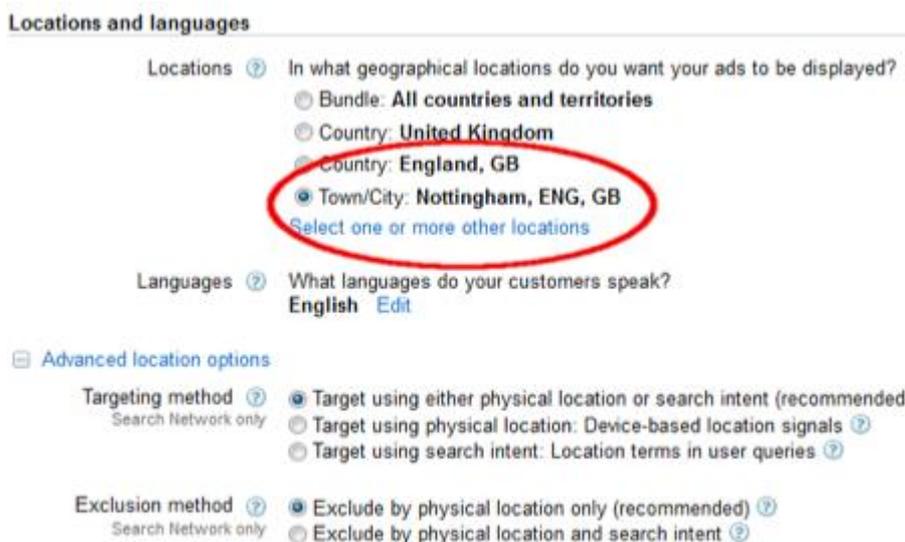
Create a campaign

The first step is to set up a brand new campaign within your account. Because I am only interested in people searching for Will making services on Google itself, I am going to specify it is "Search Network only".



Target by location

Next I will choose the geographical location I want to target. Because I only service the Nottingham area, I will choose to target by “Town/ City” and specify Nottingham.



The screenshot shows the 'Locations and languages' section of a Google Ads campaign setup. Under the 'Locations' heading, there are four radio button options: 'Bundle: All countries and territories', 'Country: United Kingdom', 'Country: England, GB', and 'Town/City: Nottingham, ENG, GB'. The 'Town/City' option is selected and circled in red. Below this, there is a link that says 'Select one or more other locations'. Under the 'Languages' heading, there is one radio button option: 'English', which is selected. Below the 'Languages' section is an expandable section titled 'Advanced location options'. Under 'Targeting method', there are three radio button options: 'Target using either physical location or search intent (recommended)', 'Target using physical location: Device-based location signals', and 'Target using search intent: Location terms in user queries'. The first option is selected. Under 'Exclusion method', there are two radio button options: 'Exclude by physical location only (recommended)' and 'Exclude by physical location and search intent'. The first option is selected.

Additionally, I can choose to tell Google how it will decide upon who fits in to this audience.

I can choose to ask Google to determine this by the searchers physical location (i.e. they are in Nottingham), or by the keywords they use in their searches (i.e. “Wills Nottingham”) regardless of where they are in the country.

I am going to ask it to cover both to make sure all my prospective customers are covered.

Choose the devices

Now I have set who sees my adverts, I can choose which devices will show my adverts.

Because of the nature of my product (i.e. it is not something people search for on the go) and my budget, I will stick with “Desktop and laptop computers”.

Networks and devices

Networks [?](#) [Search](#) [Edit](#)

Devices [?](#) All available devices (Recommended for new advertisers)
 Let me choose...
 Desktop and laptop computers
 Mobile devices with full browsers
 Tablets with full browsers
[Advanced mobile and tablet options](#)

 Your ads won't show on mobile devices.
Your ads won't show on tablets.

Bidding and budget

Bidding option [?](#) [Basic options](#) | [Advanced options](#)
 Manual bidding for clicks

Google Places

I can also take advantage of the local search information Google displays on localised search queries by setting up a Google Places profile and attaching it to this campaign.

This will make my advert stand out more, and it will also add my offices to searches through Google Maps.

Ad extensions

You can use this optional feature to include relevant business information with your ads. [Take a tour.](#)

Location [?](#) Extend my ads with location information
 Use addresses from a [Google Places account](#) [?](#)

Email: [Use a different ac](#)
Map icon:  [Choose another](#) | [Upload new](#)

Use manually entered addresses [?](#)

Product [?](#) Extend my ads with relevant product details from [Google Merchant](#) |
Sitelinks [?](#) Extend my ads with links to sections on my site
Call [?](#) Extend my ads with a phone number

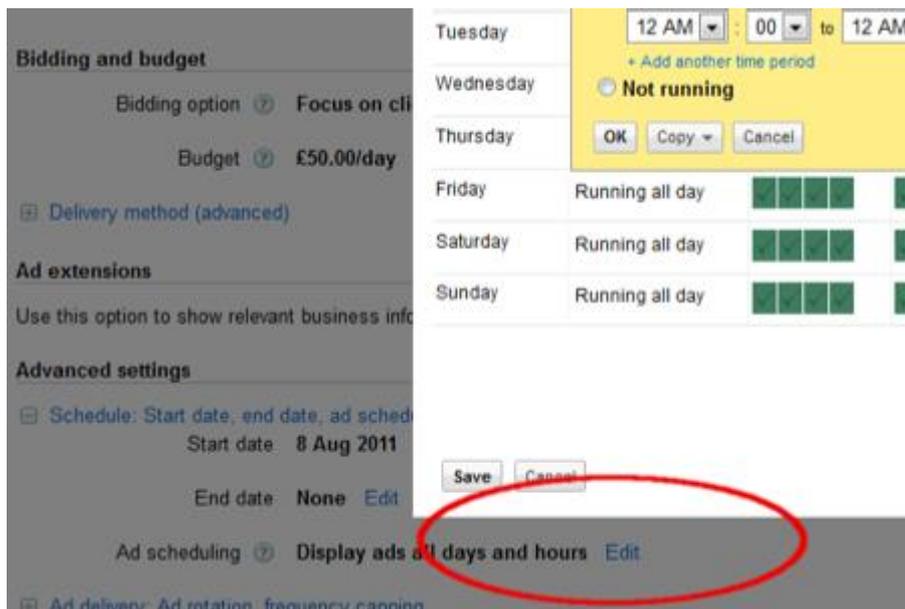
Writing an advert

Now it is time to write my advert. The key information I need to convey are the Will writing services, my office location, and I am also going to run a price promotion for couples to increase my click through rate and conversions.

You'll notice in the title I have used "{Keyword:...}" . This tells Google to auto-insert the search term used in a query my ad is shown, as long as it doesn't take the ad over the 25 character limit. This greatly increase CTR.

Choosing when my adverts will be shown

Because I don't have an unlimited budget, and I want to target people during the periods I know are busy, I am also going to use the day parting feature and have my adverts run at the times I want them to.



And we are done!

I now have a campaign set up for my Will writing services that will only be shown to people in the areas I support, and at the times I want them to be seen.

Responding to a poor quality score

Quality score has a huge impact on the price you will pay per click in Google AdWords.

An advertiser with a high quality score will pay a lot less per click for a higher ad position on a keyword than a competitor who has a low quality score.

If you find yourself in the unenviable position of finding one of your ads has been paused due to a poor quality score, or your quality score is dropping and you are paying more and more to maintain your average position, your initial reaction may be to cut your losses and walk away from that keyword.

However, if it is one of your core keywords for your product or service (e.g. a law firm in Sheffield simply must bid on “law firm Sheffield”) or you are up for the fight, here is a checklist to help you increase quality score and bring down your cost per click.

Quality score is based largely on click through rate of the adverts

With this in mind, research how the top 3 ads on the search results page have written their creative and take inspiration from them (don't copy directly!) – they are clearly attracting more clicks than your advert. What are the key selling points they are promoting?

Review your campaign and Ad Group structure

A well thought account will always benefit from higher click through rates, thanks to highly relevant and targeted adverts tailored to a small set of keywords.

The more relevant the ads are to a keywords, the higher the click through rate. Read more about how to structure your AdWords account.

One of the most common mistakes I see in account structure is lumping everything into one campaign and a handful of huge Ad Groups with a wide range of diverse keywords. If this describes your account, click on the link above!

Self-optimize the adverts

Write your new ads (at least 4 variations) and then set them to self-optimize. This way the system can identify the most effective adverts and automatically show the best performers more often.

Consider increasing your bid so much as to be in the top 3

Research has found that the higher the ad position, the higher the number of clicks.

By doing this your budget will go up, but it will give you a high CTR simply on the merits of being highly ranked, which Google's quality score puts a huge amount of weight in.

Look beyond CTR%

Although CTR% is the main variable, Google also looks at keyword relevancy based on the advert's landing page.

If you are bidding on a keyword Google also wants to see that keyword in the page copy and Meta data on your website (or at least keywords with a relationship to your target keyword).

Use your target keyword

A third variable is the use of the keyword in your advert. I always use the keyword in the title, main body and the visible URL.

Test and review

Keep an eye on your quality score and average position. If they are improving test the waters by reducing your bid by small increments. If you have started to acquire a good enough quality score you will find you can bid less to maintain the same position.

The quality score is purposefully a black box with many of the variables held back as a secret. Some changes can have an impact within 24 hours and others may take weeks. The trick is to be patient and not give your changes time to have an impact.

Let's get started!

30 digital marketing quick wins you can do right now

Marketing is not just about the big campaigns, flashy new technology and large budgets. In fact, it is quite the opposite. Successful marketing is made up of hundreds of small components that work together to achieve a goal.

Here are a collection of quick wins you can apply to your digital marketing today.

Use it as a checklist to make sure everything is up to date, you are presenting the right information at the right time and everything is fully optimised.

Your website

- Update your about us/ meet the team page with the latest information and pictures
- Put your telephone number on your website's home page where people can see it
- Add customer testimonials to your website (plus one or two on your home page)
- Cut out the fat: Is every page as lean as it could be?
- Add a heat map to your website to see where people are clicking on your website

Link building

- Submit your website to all your local supplier directories
- Submit your website to your industry's niche directories
- Identify your industry social bookmarking websites & submit
- Contact a thought leader in your industry for an interview (which they will then share as well)
- Conduct research in to a hot subject to generate shareable and link worthy content

Social media

- Register your brand name across the major social media websites regardless of whether you will use them right now
- Use a consistent name for all of them (e.g. twitter.com/acme, facebook.com/acme...)
- Write a strong and compelling Twitter biography
- Read socialmediaexaminer.com for ideas & tips (a great blog)
- Add a widget to your website to show positive tweets about your company

Press releases

- Always ask yourself “Why would anyone want to read this?”
- Start with a brief description of the news being announced, and then distinguish who announced it
- Link to your website in your press releases using your keywords as the anchor text
- Don’t rely on distribution services, send press releases directly to key news outlets
- Create a section on your website called “news” and put press releases there for Google to find and add you to their news search results (more tips here)

Email

- Add links for readers to sign up to your social media profiles as well
- Make it easy for people to share the email with a “share this” button
- Personalise the emails, using their name and referring to yourself in the first person
- Use Google Analytics with every link to track what people click on
- Write emails for people on the go; short, punchy & no excess fat

Analytics

- Check which pages have the highest bounce rate, investigate why and look to fix
- Identify websites referring traffic and look to develop relationship further
- Use the “search keyword” data to see what people are looking for on your website. Make popular searches more prominent on your website.
- Set up goals to see where people are leaving your website and identify leakage
- Link your Google AdWords account for a complete picture of what your traffic is doing post-click