WHY DIGITAL MARKETING?

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INTRODUCTION

If you're reading this guide, chances are you're either a marketing professional or business owner who is learning the importance of taking your business online. These days, without an online presence, it can be hard to compete and grow. And that's where digital marketing comes in.
What is digital marketing?

Digital marketing is an umbrella term that's usually used to describe online marketing tactics that exist to digitally connect a company with its audience.

From your website itself to your online branding assets, digital advertising, email marketing, online brochures and beyond, these are all digital marketing tactics and assets that can exist independently of one another.

It's important to note that the term 'digital marketing' doesn't differentiate between tactics that are designed to attract customers and tactics that are designed to interrupt them by fighting for their attention.

For example, banner ads and pop-ups would be considered a form of digital marketing alongside creating great blog content, but that doesn't mean ads are a good tactic for attracting your desired audience. In fact, banner ads and pop-ups are likely to turn people off your brand, whereas creating useful or entertaining blog content is likely to attract them.

This guide will teach you digital marketing tactics that attract customers, instead of interrupting them.

You'll learn best practices for the major pillars of digital marketing, including:

- Setting up and optimising your website
- Creating a digital content strategy
- Promoting your brand on social media
- Converting website visitors into leads
- Utilising effective paid advertising
- Turning leads into paying customers
- Measuring and improving your marketing

You'll get actionable tips for how to build your digital marketing strategy so you can grow your brand -- and your revenue. So let's get started!

STEP 1: START WITH A WEBSITE

If You Build It, They Will Come

Your website is the foundation of your digital marketing. It's the piece of real estate your business owns on the internet, where you can tell people about your product, publish original content that helps them reach their goals and overcome their challenges.

But building a pretty website isn't enough. You need to make sure you optimise it so that it generates a constant flow of visitors, leads and customers.

More and more people use search engines to find information — it's the first point of call when you have a question or you're looking for information about pretty much anything. So, it's important for your website to be displayed in search results so that when people are searching for something related to your company, they can click through to your website and find the information they're looking for.

Search engine optimisation, or SEO, is the key to getting your website discovered via search engines like Google, Bing, and Yahoo. The traditional approach to SEO involves two sets of tactics: on-page SEO and off-page SEO.

On a basic level, on-page SEO is the strategic implementation of keywords on your website, including in page titles, headers, meta descriptions, and other elements you can see. However it can become much more technical, looking into improve your site structure, page load speed, and the rate at which Google is able to index your website.

Off-page SEO refers to improving your website's overall authority, which is largely determined by what other websites are linking to you. The goal with off-site SEO is to attract inbound links (or "backlinks") from relevant, authoritative websites.
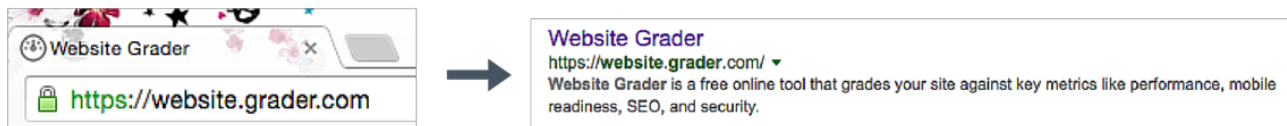
SEO for the Modern Age

In the past, the goal of SEO was to impress (or trick) the search engines so that they'd give you higher rankings by gaming backlinks and adding as many keywords on a page as possible — with the ultimate goal being to achieve the coveted #1 spot in the search results for one of your target keywords.

Today, search engines are smarter. They can tell the difference between spammy websites that are designed to game the system, and legitimate websites that are providing relevant high-quality content. **Modern SEO is about optimising for the searchers, not just the search engines.**

Getting Started with SEO: 5 Elements to Optimise

1. Page Titles

A page title is the text you see at the top of your browser window when viewing a web page. It's also the title of the page that is presented in search engine results.

Page titles can be found and edited in your site's HTML. The text that is surrounded with the <title> tag is your page's title. Here are some guidelines for coming up with effective page titles:

- Write page titles that describe -- and align with -- a page's content.

- Include relevant keywords (which should happen naturally if you follow the above tip).

- Place keywords as close to the beginning of the title as possible.

- Make it fewer than 70 characters long. (Longer page titles will get cut off by web browsers and in search results. If you make the page title too long, it will also dilute the importance of the keywords mentioned.)

- Include your company name at the end of the page title if there's space.

- Use different page titles for each page of your website.

2. Meta Descriptions

A meta description is a short summary that you can write for a web page, which search engines display in search results.
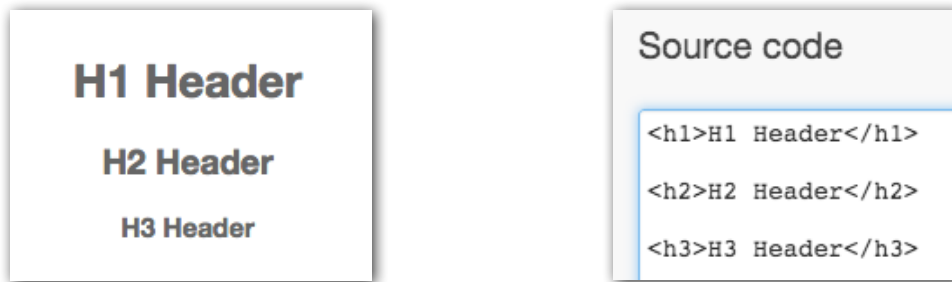

These descriptions don't count toward search engine rankings, but they are still incredibly useful for increasing click-through rate. When creating a description, the goal should be to write compelling copy that actually describes what's on a page so searchers are enticed to visit your website over another that appears in the same results page.

3. Headings

If a piece of text appears larger or more prominent than the other text on a page, it's probably part of a heading. You can verify this by checking the HTML code of a webpage and looking for text within an <h1>, <h2>, or <h3> tag surrounding it.

Both search engines and searchers tend to pay more attention to headings in comparison with regular paragraph text because their larger size denotes the topic of a section. Many readers may scan your blog post, for example, until the find a section that addresses their specific query. It's a good idea to include keywords in your headings whenever possible.

Keep in mind that <h1> tags give the text more weight as keywords than <h2> or <h3> tags. Including too many headings dilutes the importance of keywords in other headings, so we recommend using the <h1> tag only once. If the page is text-heavy (like a blog post), then feel free to break up the content with multiple <h2> tags as section headers, and <h3> tags as paragraph titles.

4. Images

Images on a web page can enhance user experience. When inserting images into your website, however, you should keep in mind the following:

- **Don't use images excessively.** More pictures can slow down the loading of your page, thus negatively impacting both user experience and SEO — search engines take page loading time into account in their ranking algorithms.

- **Customise the "alt text" of an image.** For various reasons, the images on your site may fail to render. To ensure that visitors can still understand the information you're presenting in the image, customise the "alt text" attribute of an image to describe the image. This will also help search engines understand that your image is relevant to the page, which is factored into search algorithms and will help you draw in relevant traffic from image searches. When writing alt tags, separate words with a dash (-).

File name:
src="The-Marketer's-Crash-Course-in-Visual-Content-Creation-Ebook"

Alt Text:
alt="marketer's crash course in visual content creation ebook"

5. URL Structure

The URL of a web page is its web address. For example, HubSpot's blog has a URL of http://blog.hubspot.com. URL structure refers to how the text in a URL is organised, as well as how the different URLs on your website interact with one another.

When structuring your website's URLs, there are a few best practices to keep in mind:

- **Separate keywords with hyphens.** For your internal page URLs, separate individual keywords with hyphens (-). For example: http://hubspot.com/marketing-automation/ is a good URL that captures 'marketing' and 'automation' as keywords.

- **Describe what's on the page.** Structure your URLs so that searchers can easily understand what information they're going to find. For example, if you land on a company's products page, seeing the URL http://company.com/products/product-name will be much more reassuring than something like http://company.com/1543?/eh?.

- **Use 301 redirects when necessary.** A 301 redirect forwards an old URL to a new one. Make sure you do this if you change the URL of a page on your site. A common mistake is not applying a 301 redirect between yoursite.com and www.yoursite.com. This can be quite a problem from an SEO standpoint, because search engines will give separate credit to both versions of your site.

Want to learn more about SEO?

Download our free guide, Learning SEO From the Experts, which features advice from Moz's Rand Fishkin, HubSpot's Dharmesh Shah, and more.

LEARNING
SEO
From the Experts

HubSpot

Optimising for Mobile

The topic of mobile marketing is tossed around frequently in marketing circles, often with many different intended meanings. While mobile marketing can mean many things, there is one primary message being conveyed to marketers looking to take advantage of mobile: optimisation of websites for mobile viewing.

While there are a few different options for providing a mobile web experience, such as creating a separate mobile site or launching an app, the best option -- from an optimisation standpoint -- is using responsive design.

A responsive website uses the same URL and HTML across all devices: desktops, laptops, tablets, and smartphones. The only thing that changes is the CSS, which is a programming language that describes the style and formatting of a web page.

CSS allows the content on your website to adapt to different screen sizes, which means visitors always get a great viewing and browsing experience. What's more, Google prefers responsive design to other mobile technologies because it allows for more efficient crawling and indexing.

STEP 2: CREATE DIGITAL CONTENT TO GET TRAFFIC

Content Is King

Now that you've optimised your website, it's time to create some content.

Content is the fuel that should drive your digital marketing strategy. By creating valuable, high quality content that's targeted at specific, well-defined audiences, you'll do more than attract visitors to your website: You'll attract the right visitors, who are likely to convert into leads (and customers).

What's more, content will help considerably with your website's SEO. Remember "off-page" SEO from the previous section? Creating and distributing content is the best way to earn those valuable inbound links from other sites. That can boost your search rankings and help improve your website's discoverability.

Blogging for Business

A blog makes your website more dynamic by automatically injecting new content every time an article is published. Search engines reward higher rankings to websites that consistently add fresh content, and these higher rankings translate into new visitors and leads for your business.

When blogging, take off your hat as a business owner or marketing manager and try to think like a magazine publisher. The goal of your business blog should be to publish valuable, non-promotional posts, much in the way a column or an article in an industry magazine would. Also, think about the words you are using. Avoid industry jargon that only your employees would understand as this might alienate your target audience. Instead, think of the words your customers use to describe your business and apply those phrases to your blogging language.
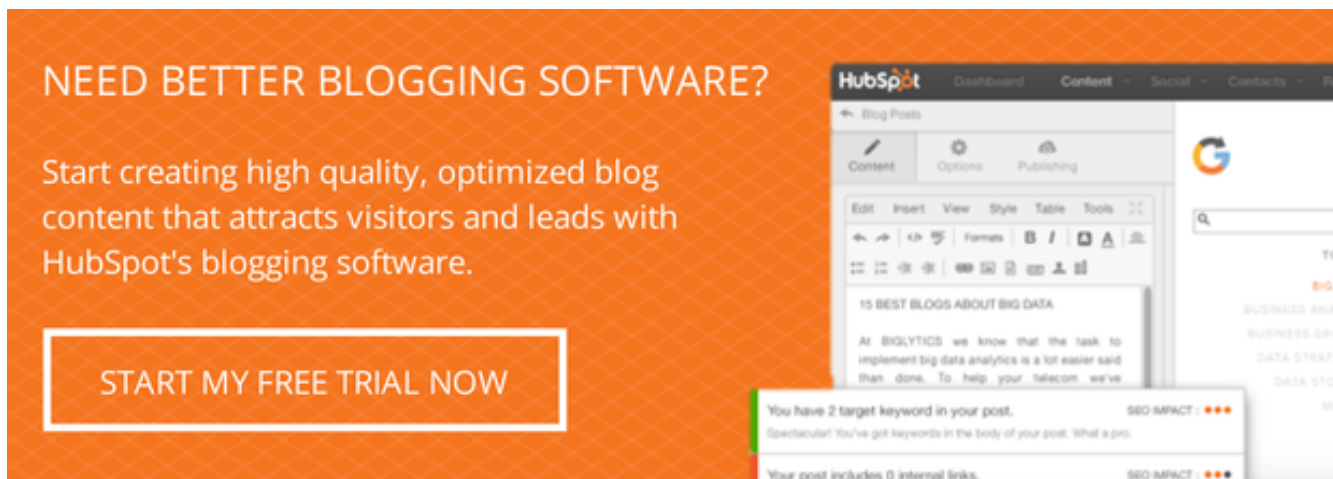
What Do I Write About?

Most business blogs start with a purpose. What are you trying to educate your industry and potential customers about?

This education is not about your product. It's about common industry issues, the problems your potential customers face and, sometimes, the solutions your product or service offer to tackle these challenges.

A great way to start blogging is to answer the ten most common questions you get asked by prospective new customers. Do this once a week for ten weeks and you have the foundations of a successful blog.

Once those first ten weeks are over, check out your blogging analytics to see which articles resonated the most with your audience. You can measure this through free tools such as Google Analytics or a Content Management System (CMS) such as HubSpot. If two or three of the posts received a significantly higher number of views and inbound links, try to expand on the topics at hand. Consider interviewing a coworker to reveal their thoughts on the subject.

Remember to let your expertise and passion shine through in your blog content.

Key Components of a Great Blog Post

- **A compelling title -** A blog post's title is the first thing people will see, so it should clearly indicate what the article is about. Clarity and specificity attract readers and prompt them to share the post with their networks.

- **Well-written and formatted text -** The body of your post should be well-written and formatted in a way that makes it easy to read. Consider using header tags and bullet points to break up the content into sections. Ask a coworker or a friend to review the post before you publish.

- **Multimedia content -** Relevant multimedia content can make a blog post more memorable and fun to read. It also helps to break up the text to make it more pleasing to the eye. Aim to add at least one relevant image per blog post. Slideshare presentations, video, and infographics are examples of other multimedia content you can feature.

- **Links -** Include in-text links to relevant content, thus helping readers dig deeper into the resources they are most interested in. Your links can, naturally, point to your own internal pages and landing pages to help you generate more leads from your content.

- **Call-to-Action (CTA) -** Each and every blog post you publish should include a relevant call-to-action in the article to help boost lead generation. More on that next...

Generating Leads with Blogging

Business blogging presents a fantastic platform for attracting organic traffic and engaging with your audience. However, the primary goal of your business blog should be to move your website visitors to the next stage in their buyer's journey (e.g. making them a subscriber or a lead). To achieve this goal, add calls-to-action (CTAs) to your posts and have them link to landing pages that provide downloadable access to more in-depth learning materials, such as ebooks or webinars.

Make sure to include CTAs both in the sidebar of your blog as well as on every individual post you publish. In addition to image/button CTAs, you can also include text CTAs within the body of your blog content.

Of course, blogging isn't the only way to generate leads using content. Next, we'll dive into other content formats for generating leads, as the more diverse your content types are, the more people you cater to.

Need help planning your content?

Use this free content marketing planning template to complete a content audit, set goals, brainstorm content ideas, and create an editorial calendar for your content plans.

Other Content for Generating Leads

While it's a great place to start, blog content isn't the only type of content you can be creating to be successful with digital marketing. You need to produce longer-form content items like ebooks, whitepapers, or research reports than can be used for lead generation. Also consider creating non-text based content like how-to videos, webinars, templates and free tools.

These content "offers" (as we call them at HubSpot) will feed your business conversions. An industry resource that takes some time and effort to put together will provide the type of value visitors are looking for. It might educate, enrich one's knowledge, or simply entertain. In any case, it has the power to achieve an information exchange: the process in which a visitor fills out a lead capture form to access the resource.
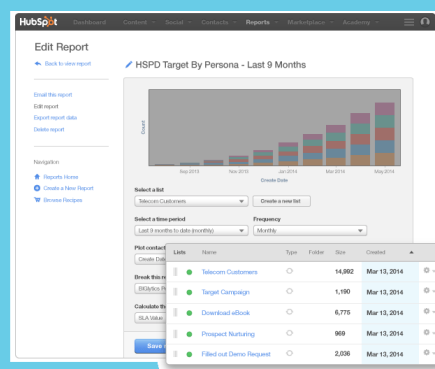

The offers you produce shouldn't be randomly selected. On the contrary, there is some precise strategy behind that decision: the insights gained from your marketing analytics. Reporting insights will direct you to the types of content which attract your target audience. For instance, if a whitepaper on heating systems brought you more leads and sales than a webinar on the same topic, you might want to focus on creating more text-based content.

Need better analytics tools?

Try HubSpot's for free! See how you can prove the ROI of your marketing efforts effortlessly with:

• Channel analytics
• Attribution report
• A/B testing
• And more

STEP 3: USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO INCREASE ENGAGEMENT

The Importance of Social

Social media provides a platform for direct communication between your customers, prospects, and employees. What's more, it is a key driver of content distribution and brand visibility online.

While there are a wide array of social networks that you can use to your advantage, we're going to start by focusing on the "big three": Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

Facebook for Business

With more than 1 billion monthly active users, Facebook is the most popular social network in the world. From a marketing perspective, Facebook serves as a powerful platform for building a community of advocates and increasing word-of-mouth marketing.

In order to grow your Facebook fanbase, you need to make your company page on Facebook as discoverable as possible. Here are few things you can do to help make that happen:
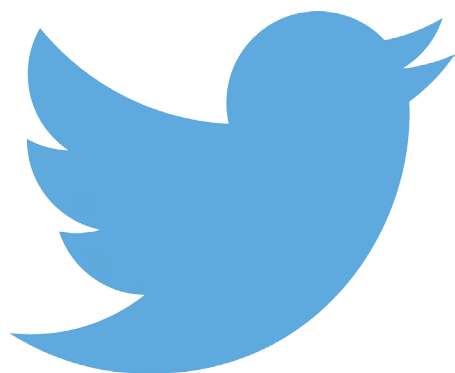
- **Fill out your company information completely.** Be sure to include an overview of what your business offers as well as a link to your website.

- **Invite existing contacts to like your page.** Reach out to your friends, family, and existing customers and ask them to "like" your page on Facebook.

- **Integrate Facebook into your other online channels.** Use Facebook's social plugins (including the Like Box and Like Button) to get people to engage with your Facebook page without having to go to Facebook.com.

- **Add value by sharing content.** If you're in tune with your buyer personas -- representations of your ideal customers -- you'll have a good idea of what's going to resonate with your audience. (We'll talk more about personas in the next chapter!)

- **Pay for engagement using Facebook advertising such as boosted posts.** Due to Facebook's algorithm, you may find that just posting updates on your company page doesn't get you much engagement. Consider boosting these posts to get in front of more of people.

Want to learn more about using Facebook for business?

Download our free guide, [How to Attract Customers with Facebook](#), which will help you master your organic and paid Facebook playbook to get more traffic, leads, and customers.

Twitter for Business

Twitter is a social network on which people share 140-character messages, and users can "follow" each other's updates.

Unless you're a celebrity or your brand is already a household name, amassing a huge following on Twitter isn't exactly a walk in the park. However, there are a few big levers you can pull to more quickly and effectively attract quality followers for your business's Twitter account:

- **Create and optimise your Twitter profile.** Let potential followers know who you are, and provide a reason why you're worth a follow.

- **Tweet 24/7.** Your greatest tactic for growing your followers is to tweet around the clock. Tweet content you create, tweet content created by others, and tweet that content more than once! You can use scheduling tools such as Hootsuite or [HubSpot's Social Inbox](#) to manage your posting frequency.

- **Curate content like a pro.** Use Feedly, Goodreads, Alltop, Twitter (lists), StumbleUpon, LinkedIn Pulse, and what's hot on Pinterest and Google+ to discover great, relevant content to tweet.

- **Make tweets visual.** Take the time to create great visuals and add them to your tweets. It pays off in engagement, conversion, and click-through rates. You don't have to be a designer to create beautiful images -- here are [195+ visual templates to get you started](#)!

LinkedIn for Business

LinkedIn is a social network that you can use to engage with prospective customers as well as prospective employees. As such, it is a truly unique space on the web, one that blurs the lines between knowledge-sharing platform and relationship-building tool.

Just like with Facebook and Twitter, the first step when starting out with LinkedIn for business is to make your business easy to find. Your ultimate goal is to build an engaged audience and to position your business as a thought leader in your industry.
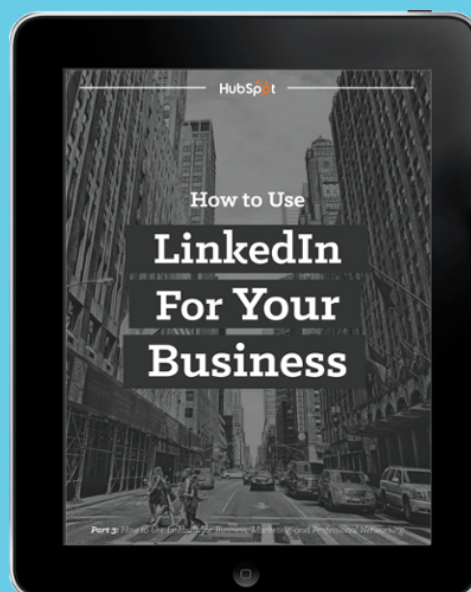
Ready to get started? Just follow these simple steps:

- **Optimise your company description.** Make it easy for the right people to find your company page on LinkedIn by adding keywords in the description and 'specialties' sections.

- **Get visual.** Keep your company page fresh with rich cover images that reflect your company's accomplishments, events, and offerings.

- **Share company updates regularly.** Every like, comment, and share increases your reach. Prompt your followers to take action on your updates by asking thoughtful questions.

- **Publish long-form content.** LinkedIn is a great platform for sharing content aimed at your industry. Have your executives and other leaders at your company regularly publish longer pieces on LinkedIn to build your brand's thought-leadership.

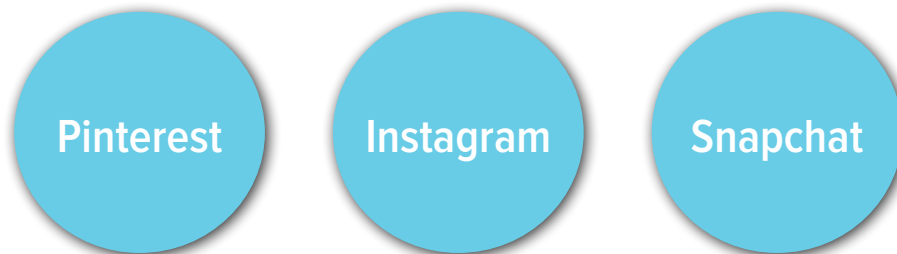## Want to learn more about using LinkedIn to build your brand?

Download our free kit, How to Use LinkedIn for Business, Marketing, and Networking to learn how you can grow your company and personal brand on this highly effective business network.

More Social Resources

Want to learn more about a social network that isn't part of the "big three"? Just click on one of the icons below.

The Art of Social Listening

An important part of leveraging social media for business is to understand what industry-related conversations are happening online and recognising when you should respond.

Here are a few tools you can use to monitor your business and industry mentions in social media:

- **Google Alerts -** Set up multiple Google Alerts for your company, brand, products, leaders, industry terms, etc. The alerts will get delivered directly to your email inbox at the frequency you indicate (e.g. daily or as they happen) and they are a great way to track mentions of your brand and relevant keywords on the web.

- **Social media management tools -** These tools allow you to save keyword searches as a live stream so you won't miss out on what's being said about your brand, your industry, and your products.

- **Social Inbox -** In addition to providing the social monitoring functionality of a traditional social media management tool, HubSpot's Social Inbox also plugs into your contacts database, colour codes your customers and leads, and helps you prioritise your engagement so you can focus your time on the conversations that are important to your business.

STEP 4: CONVERT VISITORS INTO LEADS WITH LANDING PAGES

Once you've optimised your website, launched your blog, and started promoting content on social media and it's been several weeks, you're probably starting to see a spike in web traffic.

There's only one problem. All of that traffic to your site isn't generating any new business. People are visiting your site, but those visits aren't leading to new customers -- or even new sales leads. So what do you do?

Simple: **focus on conversion.**

Right now you are still at the top of your marketing funnel. You need to move down and start converting your website visitors into sales leads. To do this, you'll need to come up with a compelling content offer for your prospects, create a call-to-action (CTA) to promote that offer, and launch a landing page with a form for visitors to provide their information in exchange for that offer. Finally, you'll need to measure and iterate the whole process.

In this section, we will go over the conversion process in more detail. But first, take a look at how converting visitors into leads fits into what we call the "Inbound Methodology" -- the best way to turn strangers into customers and promoters of your business.

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Phase 1: Coming Up with a Gated Content Offer

A gated offer means you put a content offer, such as an ebook, webinar, free tools, or any other heftier offer, behind a form. A gated offer is the most important part of any lead generation campaign. It's the initial attraction that catches the attention of your website visitors and it gives them a reason to fill out the form used to collect their information.

Know Who You're Creating Content For

Your offer should target the type of sales lead you're trying to attract. For example, if you're a golf instructor, you'll want to create offers that will appeal to golfers trying to improve their game. If you're a sales process consultant, you'll want to create offers that appeal to executives trying to improve their sales process.

To ensure you have a solid understanding of the audience you're trying to target with your content offer, take the time to develop buyer personas. **A buyer persona is a semi-fictional representation of your ideal customer, which is based on actual customer data.**

For example, as a golf instructor, you might have a buyer persona named "Gary Golfer," who represents your most common type of customer. And through a combination of research, surveys, and interviews, you know that Gary Golfer is in his mid-40s, he golfs twice a week, he owns all the golf accessories and gadgets, and he prefers watching instructional golf videos vs. reading about golf tips. Armed with this kind of detailed information, you'll have a great starting point for creating a targeted content offer.

Need help creating buyer personas for your business?

Download our free Buyer Persona Templates and we'll walk you through the process step-by-step in the guide included.

Product-focused Content

Product-focused offers can include a custom consultation, free trial, or demo of your product. Of course, there's no reason to be constrained by what's typical. Use anything you think will work for your target customers. Also, keep in mind that the offer is a conversation starter for the sales team, so it should be designed to start a conversation that will lead to a sale.

Phase 2: Creating Calls-to-Action (CTAs)

Once you decide on your offer, create a few compelling calls-to-action (CTAs). As we mentioned earlier in this guide, a call-to-action is a button or a link that grabs a visitor's attention and directs that visitor to a landing page. Calls-to-action are located everywhere: on website pages, in emails and blog posts, within content offers, etc. They are the key trigger behind lead generation.

On the landing page, a visitor is prompted to complete the form by entering their contact information and other details in order to receive what's being offered. Through this information exchange the visitor converts into a lead with whom your sales team can follow up. Naturally, not all conversion events are created equal and, as you become more experienced with internet marketing, you will have to start thinking about lead scoring.

If you have an effective call-to-action, you'll convert a high percentage of your website visitors into leads. To learn more about call-to-action design, placement and copywriting, download our free guide, How to Write & Design Compelling Calls-to-Action.

Phase 3: Creating Compelling Landing Pages

The landing page is where your website visitors arrive after they click on your call-to-action, and where they will fill out the form to download your offer. Your sales team will use the information you ask for in this form to follow up... provided it's a quality lead.

Keep in mind that once visitors submit their information on a landing page (below, left), they should be redirected to a follow-up, or thank-you, page (below, right) where they can access the offer.

Phase 4: Testing, Measuring, Iteraiting

Content offers, calls-to-action, and landing pages are the core elements of the conversion process, but you can't stop there. If you just have a single conversion pathway, you have very little insight into the process and the way it performs. **In order to improve your conversion process, you need to constantly measure and experiment.**

Some marketing metrics you should watch closely include the click-through rate of your call-to-action, the conversion rate of your landing page, and the number of new leads and sales an offer resulted in.
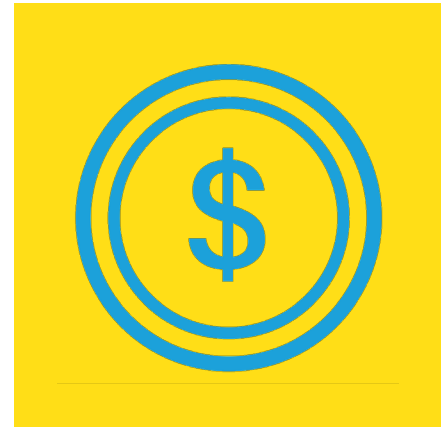
In order to determine which elements best help you achieve your goals, you have to test different CTAs, landing pages, and offers. If a call-to-action has been on your home page for a month, vary the messaging or swap out an entirely new CTA, and after another month, measure which one performed best. If landing page conversions are low, make a change to the page layout and measure the results. Don't be afraid to test different variations; you can always switch back if the old version worked better. It will be worth it when you've found the best combination that increases your site's conversions.

Once you become more familiar with this process, you can grab our guide, Getting Started With A/B Testing, which will show you how to optimise different elements of your marketing funnel through split testing.

STEP 5: SUPPLEMENT YOUR EFFORTS WITH PAID ADVERTISING

When you're first building your brand online, it can be difficult to rely entirely on your owned channels, such as your blog and Facebook page, to generate enough leads for your business. That's why many marketers choose to supplement their owned media promotions with paid digital marketing, such as pay-per-click (PPC) ads and native advertising.

The problem with paid ads is that they can be interruptive and annoying -- which means they become really expensive, really fast.

In this section, we'll go over ways you can make your pay-per-click (PPC) ads less annoying and more enticing to increase clicks to your website. (Unfortunately, no one's going to wake up and say "I love getting ads!" no matter how great your ad is -- but ads done right can provide enough value to click on.)

When to Use Paid Advertising

The best way to use paid advertising is to drive traffic to a page that has a specific call-to-action, such as subscribing to your blog, downloading an ebook, or signing up for a free trial: such as the landing pages you learned about in the previous section. You don't want to just pay for traffic, you want to pay for traffic that turns into subscribers and leads.

What you don't want to do is drive traffic from ads to your home page where there's no specific next action to take: that's a lot of ad dollars that are going nowhere.

Search Engine Marketing (SEM)

Search Engine Marketing (SEM), or paid search, is one of the biggest areas of paid marketing, and it refers to paying for search terms people are entering into search engines such as Google and Bing with what are known as "bids". Depending on your bid versus others bidding on the same keyword phrase, your ad will show up above organic search results for a set amount of time until you exhaust that ad's budget.

For example, if you were to bid on the term "email marketing tips", your ad would appear on the page displaying search results for that keyword. Each search engine has its own version of paid search, including Google Adwords, Bing Ads, and Yahoo! Search Ads.

How to do paid search effectively is its own additional ebook, but to get you started, here are some best practices:

• **Do keyword research** to understand which terms to bid on and understand your cost per click (CPC)

• **Always use targeting** so your ads get served to the most relevant audience. You can target by behaviour, location, device type and more. For example, if you're a mobile food delivery app located in Singapore, you really don't need to be targeting desktop users, or those outside of Singapore.

• **Set up a brand name campaign** -- this is when you bid on your company's name. For example, we would bid on "HubSpot" so that if someone searches for that term, we're displayed in the ad section as well as in organic. You don't need to bid on competitors' brand names -- it's not a sustainable or cost-effective strategy.

• **Bid on keywords related to your brand**. For example, HubSpot might bid on the term "inbound marketing" which is closely associated to our brand.

• **Optimise ads for quality score** by linking them to relevant landing pages. If your ad points to a page that a search engine doesn't think is actually related to the ad, your ad won't get served up.

FREE GUIDE: How to Use Google Adwords for PPC

Download this beginner's guide to PPC advertising to learn how to use Google Adwords to drive more leads and customers for your business.

Display Advertising

Display advertising, often referred to as banner ads, is when you pay for ad space on third-party sites. Think about a media website you've visited recently -- often, there will be ads across the top, on the right-hand side, and even bottom of their web pages.

Before you use this form of advertising, ask yourself: when was the last time you clicked on a display ad?

For many of us, the answer is "never" because these ads have a bad reputation as being distracting, disruptive, and unrelated to anything you might be interested in.

While it's the least effective of the different types of digital advertising, if you do choose to use display advertising, make sure you're using proper targeting so that your ads are getting served to the right people in the right place.

Here are some display PPC tips you'll want to keep in mind:

• **Create a "blacklist" of site types you do not want your ads appearing on.** You don't want your brand on sites that don't mesh with your content or brand, such as error pages or pages containing profane language or images. Advertisers such as Google Display Network allow you to do this in the account settings section.

• **Always use images** -- text-only display ads will get completely lost. Take into account how images have performed on other organic and paid channels (for example, see how it performed on your Facebook page or in a Twitter ad).

• **Test your ad copy, too.** Create several ads driving to the same landing page. After a day of running, see which ad is performing best and turn the others off. You'll get further with your dollar.

Native Social Advertising

Native advertising refers to ads that look like they are part of the platform they are on. You may have seen promoted posts in your Facebook news feed, sponsored updates on LinkedIn or perhaps promoted tweets on Twitter. They look like a normal update in the user's feed but are marked as "sponsored" or "promoted" so users know it's an advertisement.

When you combine native advertising with good targeting, which many platforms such as Facebook allow, you can get great bang for your buck. This is because you are able to serve relevant content to the right audience.

On Facebook, for example, if you are a marketing agency that works with startups, you could target by location, interests, and job title to show a relevant piece of content to them. Or, if you're an ecommerce platform for quirky women's shoes, you could target by locations you ship to, gender, age, and what they've "liked" previously online.

Here are some best practices for social advertising:

Twitter

• **Use the right type of ad for your goal.** You can use ads that are geared towards improving engagement such as retweets and favourites, website clicks or conversions, app installs, followers, or even leads. If you want to generate leads, use the website clicks ad. If you want to get blog subscribers, consider using Twitter lead gen ads, which collect the subscriber with just a click.

• **Always use images.** Ads that use imges perform 3x better than text-based ones.

• **Don't use hashtags in paid tweets.** Each link you add reduces the click-through rate on the website URL you're actually trying to drive users towards.

Facebook

• **Create a targeted audience for every ad placement.** You might reach fewer people, but targeting by demographics, interests and location can help you increase engagement because your content will be more relevant to a larger portion of your audience.

• **Take advantage of all components of your ad creative**, such as the call-to-action button and news feed link description.

• **Choose what medium your ad is displayed on**. If conversions is your goal, consider limiting ads to just the newsfeed. If you have a longer form on your landing page, you may want to limit it to desktop-only.

LinkedIn

• **LinkedIn is a great platform for B2B companies** -- so if you're selling products or services to another company, consider utilising this platform for high-value clicks.

• **Sponsored updates with video or images tend to perform better** than those without. When choosing what content to promote, consider trying these formats out.

• **Use 60 characters or less** for the description of your ad so that the text doesn't get cut off the page.

• **Target your ads to the right audience** -- with LinkedIn, you can get the most granular with your targeting out of all the social media platforms available, so take your time to find the right audience. You can even target employees at specific companies, so if you have a targeted campaign aimed at a few enterprises in a certain industry this might be a great way to drive the right traffic back to your website.

Retargeting

Once you've got a fair amount of traffic and built up your database with leads, you can even use paid advertising to move those leads towards taking further actions and becoming customers. This form of advertising is called paid retargeting, where, you guessed it, you retarget your existing leads.

Retargeting website visitors

Say you get 10,000 visits a month to your website. You know that the people visiting your website interacted with it somehow -- maybe your content, or your products, or they want to learn more about your company. But you don't have their email address, which means there's no way for you to reach them.

That's where retargeting comes in. You can use tracking pixels (snippets of code on your website) to mark visitors with a cookie. You can then show those visitors relevant ads on display or social and get them back to your site.

Retarget contacts in your database

You can supplement your marketing automation, which you'll learn more about in the next section, with paid retargeting to nurture leads into becoming customers. Essentially, you can upload a list of email addresses, phone numbers, or, in the case of Twitter, Twitter handles that you have in your database and then show ads to just those people on that native platform, such as Facebook or Twitter. One example we use is to retarget marketers who have viewed blog posts about Facebook marketing with ads for a related ebook and to subscribe to the blog.

Here's another example. Say you are a recruiting firm for corporations, and someone filled out a form to download your ebook called "10 Mistakes to Avoid During the Hiring Process" aimed at HR managers. You can take the list of everyone who's downloaded that ebook and retarget them with more relevant content -- moving them over time towards a free recruiting consultation, for example, and getting them to talk to your sales team.

Retargeting is a great way to engage your existing audience across other platforms they might be frequenting without being interruptive.

STEP 6: NURTURE LEADS INTO CUSTOMERS WITH AUTOMATION

Lead nurturing is the process of developing relationships with your potential customers by sending targeted, relevant, and valuable messages to them in a timely manner.

The end goal is to get your leads to "raise their hand" and self-select into further engaging with your business.

From a technical standpoint, a lead nurturing system -- often called marketing automation -- is software that allows you to send an automated series of email messages to early-stage leads in order to pre-qualify them before handing them over to your sales team.

As a marketer, you know that getting leads is fantastic -- but not all leads are at the point where they can be considered sales-ready.

Take a look at your existing sales funnel. How long does it typically take for a lead to become a customer after his or her first inquiry? Does the sales cycle vary for different types of purchases? Equipped with the answers to these questions, you can build some effective lead nurturing campaigns and leverage this marketing channel to qualify leads and help your sales organisation.

Learn how to close customers using marketing automation

Download our free ebook A Practical Guide to Getting Started with Marketing Automation
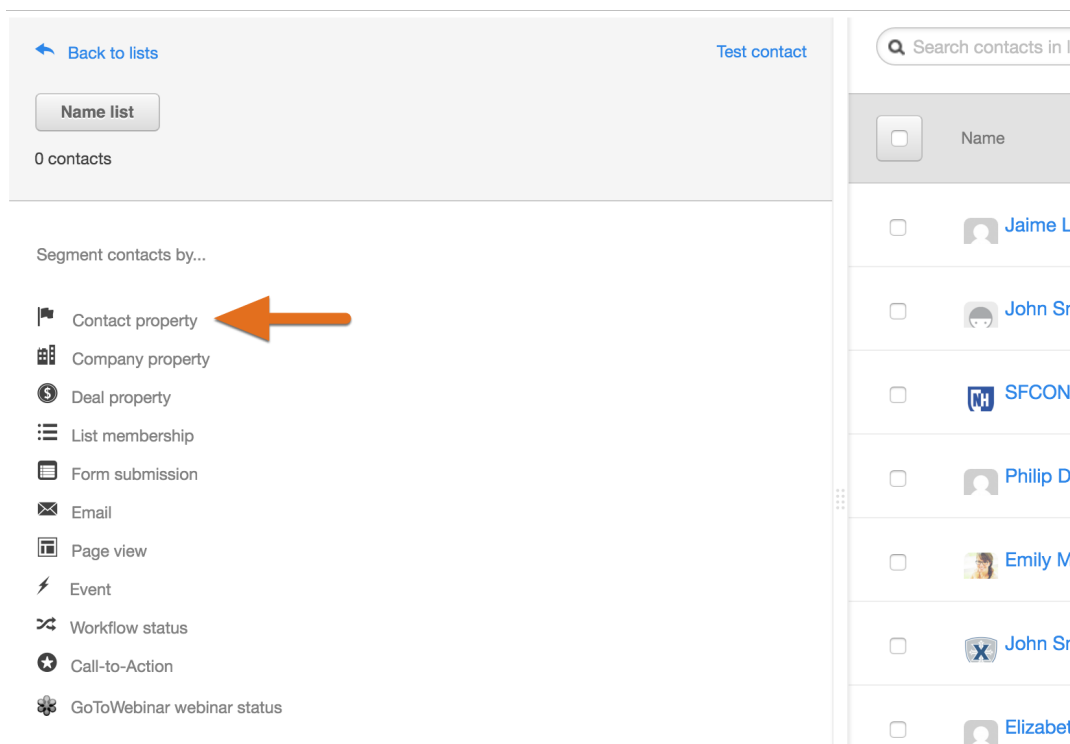
Email Marketing Best Practices

In addition to nurturing your leads through targeted email messages, you should also be looking at the larger email marketing picture, which includes growing your database, closely following key metrics, and increasing conversions.

List Building

One of the biggest challenge even for experienced internet marketers is creating opt-in opportunities. Make sure your lead forms allow your website visitors to enter their email address and opt-in to receive your messages. Give them a reason to opt-in. What's so valuable about your emails? What interesting and unique information will they receive in your email newsletter? Be explicit and phrase the benefits in a way that will resonate with your audience.

Only send messages to people who have explicitly opted in. You can follow the extreme principle of Seth Godin's "permission marketing": would your recipient be upset if they didn't receive your message? If yes, you should go ahead and send your email.

In addition to only emailing content to opt-ins, make sure you build lists tailored around specific personas -- for example, you could target people by location, how many times they've visited your website in the last 3 months, by a specific offer they've downloaded, and countless other ways. Many tools, such as HubSpot, allow you to easily create smart lists that update dynamically as contacts meet your list criteria.

Sending

- **Send emails that are relevant to the interests of your contacts.** What initially brought them to you? How can you follow-up on that interest to further engage them?

- **Be personal in your communication.** Use a real email sender name and add a personal signature. Personalise the message so the recipient remembers how and why they came to your website. For example, start with "you recently checked out our ebook..." or "thanks for subscribing to our blog!"

- **Make sure that your message adds value.** Get into the mind of your recipients and ask, "what's in it for me?" Are you emailing them just to tell them how great your product is? Or are you offering to help them solve a problem? Make the value clear in the email body and subject line.

- **Don't rely on images**, as some email clients don't load images automatically. So if your email is one large image, your recipient might not have any idea what it's about! Use images as supplementary (clickable) content in your email, and make sure you have enough text to communicate value.

- **Be consistent in your communication to set the right expectations.** Whether you send your messages daily, weekly, or monthly, pick a schedule and stick to it.

(Re)converting

Each one of your marketing messages should have a goal. Make it clear what recipients are supposed to do once they open your email. Are you driving subscribers to read a product announcement on your blog? Asking them to share an offer on social media? Inviting them to download your new ebook?

If your goal is lead generation, include a call-to-action that links to a landing page on which the recipient can reconvert and self-select to further engage with your company. But these subscribers are already existing leads for my business, you might object. Then, inform them about product-centric offers and let them qualify themselves as more sales-ready. If they are not ready to commit yet, continue nurturing them with broader offers and stay top-of-mind for them.

Remember, the landing page is part of your email campaign. Email marketing doesn't stop with a click. Your landing page is an extension of your email, and it is where your conversion takes place. Make sure your email offer and landing page are well aligned, using similar language and images.

Measuring Email Performance

- **Click-through rate (CTR) -** Click-through rate measures response: how many of the people you emailed clicked on your link(s)? The CTR can give you a sense of how compelling your offer and email messages are. Experiment with different offers, subject lines, calls-to-action, and timing to improve your email CTR.

- **What about open rate?** Open rate is an unreliable metric, as major email clients do not load the images necessary for tracking who opened an email. Instead of worrying about open rate, focus on the number of clicks your emails receive.

- **Unsubscribe rate -** Unsubscribe rate measures the percentage of recipients who opted-out of your email communications. As with open rates, the unsubscribe rate isn't a reliable picture of your email list's health. Many subscribers won't bother to go through the formal unsubscribe process but will just stop opening, reading, and clicking on your messages.

What to Measure

Measure how many of those clicks turned into reconversions on your landing page. It's the ultimate measure of an email campaign's effectiveness. The higher your conversion rate, the more relevant and compelling the offer was for your audience.

However, conversion rates are dependent on factors beyond the original email message, such as the quality of your landing page. Test different landing pages to improve the conversion on your website.

Beyond Email

In this section we covered how to use lead nurturing and email marketing to follow up with your leads and engage them an on ongoing basis to push them down the sales funnel.

However, nurturing your contacts doesn't have to be limited to email communications.

After all, you can communicate with your leads via social media or other platforms they use. That is why you should also start thinking about behaviour-driven communications, those that get triggered based on your leads' full history of interactions, both on and off your site.

STEP 7: MEASURE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF YOUR DIGITAL MARKETING

Now you are surely moving to the bottom of the sales and marketing funnel. That means you need to review the performance of your various marketing activities, identify the winning ones, and eliminate or drastically modify the ineffective campaigns. In this section we will review some metrics to monitor and suggestions for refining your internet marketing strategy.

Identify Opportunities

When you review your marketing activities, figure out what you want to improve. Do you want more people coming to your blog? Do you want to convert more of the visitors on your home page into leads? Get into the mindset of constantly looking for new opportunities.

Set a Metric for Success

In almost all cases, your metric should be quantifiable and involve a set time frame. For example, "increase website leads by X% over the next X days."

Refine Your Strategy

Analyse how your programs performed. Make changes with the intention of achieving your marketing goals by doing less of what doesn't work and more what works (and by modifying what doesn't work so that it works better).
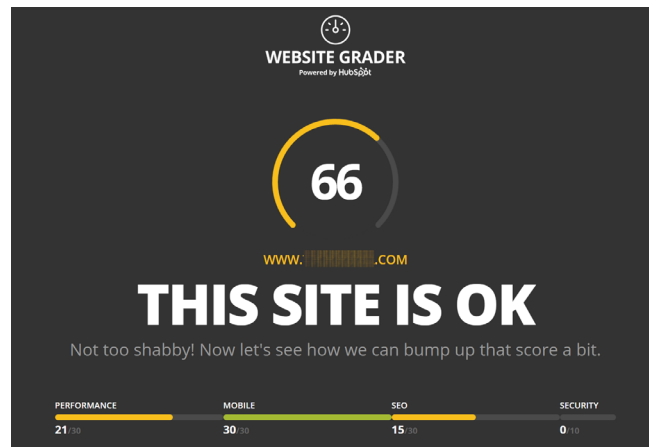
Evaluate Performance

Determine if you've met your success metric. If so, stick with your change. If you haven't met it, see what you could have done differently. In either case, continue to monitor the metric to make sure the improvement has a long-term effect.
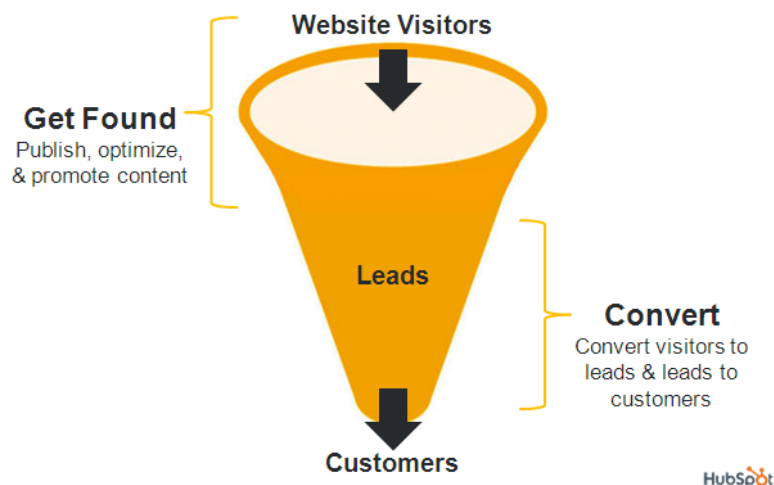
Metrics to Track and Report On

In order for your refinements to have a big impact, you need to monitor several key factors. Before diving into how to improve them, let's first discuss what the relevant metrics are.

- **Website performance -** How strong are the components of your website, such as SEO, mobile optimisation, and page load time? You can check how strong your website is with the free Website Grader tool.

- **Traffic -** Overall, how many people are coming to your website? Look into what channel drove the most and least visits. Take that knowledge, make iterations and launch campaigns that will increase visits.

- **Leads -** How much of this traffic are you converting into leads and potential customers? This number should be constantly growing to ensure a steady flow of revenue.

- **Customers -** You should always be mapping your campaigns and channels to customer acquisition. How many sales did you close this month? How does that compare to last month's performance? The ability to make this comparison is invaluable to any marketing organisation. Not to mention how happy these return on investment (ROI) numbers are going to make your boss.

- **Customer Acquisition Cost (CAC) -** How much are you investing to draw in each new customer? If you rely primarily on outbound marketing methods, like trade shows and direct mail, your cost per customer is probably pretty high. If you are following the steps outlined in this guide and focus on inbound marketing, you are saving your company a lot of money.

- **New vs. Repeat Visitors -** Of your overall traffic, how many visitors are returning to your site, and how many new people are finding you? Both types of visitors are good. Attracting new visitors means new people are finding you through various channels. Attracting repeat visitors means you've given people good reason to come back to your site.

- **Effectiveness by Channel -** What promotion channels or referring sources are sending you the most traffic? Focus on long-term results, not short-term traffic spurts you might get from news coverage or press releases.

Steps for Improvement

Keywords

Try new keywords or variations of your existing target keywords to see if they help bring in more organic traffic. Since each page on your site can incorporate different keywords, there are tons of opportunities to do this.
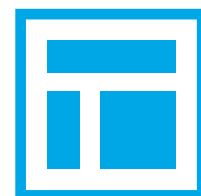
SEO

See if changing a simple on-page SEO factor can help boost visits. Examples of on-page factors are page titles, image alt tags, and headings. As a simple test, try adding alt text to all your images to see if you generate more traffic from Google's image search results.

Conversions

Try new things with your conversion forms or landing pages. For example, makea change to the layout by switching up the form placement or featuring an image that's completely different from what you currently have. You can use A/B tests to methodically increase your conversion rates (read more on how to set up A/B tests here).

Content

Determine which content is bringing you the most traffic and leads. This could be an opportunity to either focus more on that kind of content, or refine your promotion of other content.

Social Media

Evaluate which social media channels are generating the most site visitors and leads. Again, you can either focus on your successful social media platforms, or try improving your performance in your less successful ones.

Lead Nurturing and Email Marketing

Maybe you're sending emails too frequently -- or not frequently enough. Maybe the calls-to-action in your email are not appropriate for your audience. Always keep experimenting and testing!

MORE FREE RESOURCES

Digital marketing might seem difficult and daunting. But by tackling each digital marketing tactic step by step, you can make it more manageable and start producing results. We hope that by reading this guide, you've gained an understanding of how digital marketing can improve your overall marketing program and help you achieve business growth.

Now go forth and conquer digital marketing, one step at a time!

Your next step? Take a free online digital marketing course to build your skills, or sign up for a free digital marketing assessment with a HubSpot marketing specialist!

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