DIGITAL MARKETING

STRATEGY GUIDE

THE ULTIMATE TUTORIAL ON HOW TO MASSIVELY INCREASE TRAFFIC AND SALES TO ANY WEBSITE WITH DIGITAL MARKETING.

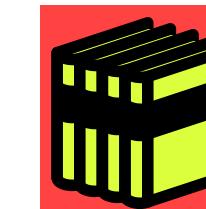ClickMinded

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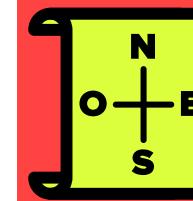
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1 THE DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY GUIDE

The ultimate tutorial on **how to massively increase traffic and sales to any website** with digital marketing.

WORLD MAP: WHAT IS DIGITAL MARKETING?

In one sentence:

Digital marketing is just all the things we do to grow a business through different internet channels.

That can mean a bunch of different things, like:

- Getting more website visitors
- Attracting more leads
- Generating more sales
- Driving more repeat purchases

You can accomplish these things in a number of different ways, and each way is a skill of its own.

For example:

Want to get more website visitors? Great! You could:

- Increase your rankings on search engines and drive more free, organic traffic
- Post great content on social media and get more people visiting your site
- Send more emails to your existing users and get them visiting you more often

Want to get more leads? Awesome! You could:

- Create some great new content and give it away, in exchange for an email address
- Set up a sales funnel that asks users to enter their phone number to receive a free quote
- Launch an Adwords campaign with the goal of getting prospects to schedule a call

Want to get more sales? Super! You could:

- Create a page that ranks on Google for "<competitor name> alternative"
- Set up a remarketing campaign for users that visited your site but didn't purchase
- Create an abandoned-cart email that reminds users to complete their purchase

That, is how digital marketing for business, works.

Sounds simple, but these are all difficult things to achieve.

Just because you have a Facebook profile doesn't mean you're a social media marketer. The fact that you know how to write and send emails doesn't make you an email marketer.

Unless you can generate growth, you are not a digital marketer.

Sales Funnels: Growth by Building a Powerful Conversion Path

I don't need to tell you stories about YouTubers or influencers who make less than minimum wage.

Over the years, I've met dozens of people like that:

People who are great at things like generating tons of traffic or creating super interesting content…

…yet, they're unable to use those skills to build a business or get a job in digital marketing.

100% of the time, the reason is that these people don't understand sales funnels or how to build them.

A sales funnel framework can easily turn any of these people into a very dangerous (in a good way) digital marketer.

Building a sales funnel is the process of systematically turning strangers into customers and advocates.

It's important for you to learn this before diving into any specific digital marketing channel.

You'll learn this in the "Sales Funnels Strategy" chapter of this guide

Content Marketing: Growth by Delivering the Right Message at the Right Time

9 times out of 10, when you hear someone say they will "invest in content marketing", what they really mean is "we will start a blog and promise to write regularly".

Just to be clear: That is not content marketing.

In reality, content marketing is much more complex (and fun).

In the past, content and advertising used to be entirely separate. Content creators created content, and advertisers, well, advertisers advertised:

Nowadays, the content IS the advertising.

Content AND Advertising

Content | Advertisement

Content marketers can't work on their own and marketers specialized in a specific channel (e.g. SEO, digital advertising, email marketing, social media) can't do their work without content marketers.

Content marketing is woven into every digital marketing channel—it's the input for every campaign.

It's a highly strategic skill that every digital marketer should hone (even if they don't plan on specializing in content marketing).

You'll learn this in the "Content Marketing Strategy" chapter of this guide

SEO: Growth by Attracting Massive Traffic from Search Engines

Most people I've talked to who start looking into SEO say the same thing:

"I tried to learn SEO but couldn't figure it out—there's too much information. Maybe I should just hire someone to do this for me."
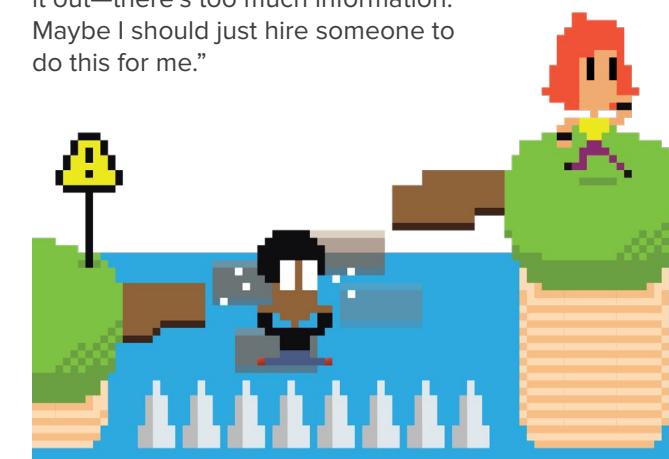
This isn't entirely their fault.

There IS a lot of information…but most of it is unnecessary noise and bad advice.

I'll save you the time and tell you the only thing that really matters in one sentence:

To be successful in SEO, you just need to understand what users are looking for, and then create awesome, relevant content that answers their questions.

It's that simple.

You'll learn this in the "SEO Strategy" chapter of this guide

Email Marketing: Growth by Helping Users Move Through the Sales Funnel

Once you spend a bit of time reading digital marketing content, you'll start seeing a variation of this phrase as the introduction to any blog post about email marketing.

"Email marketing is the most underrated digital marketing channel."

This needs to stop.

No one believes that.

No serious digital marketer underestimates email marketing—only people who have no idea about what they're doing undervalue email marketing.

It has been proven time and time again that email marketing works.

Massive businesses have been built on the basis of gaining subscribers and sending emails.

Email marketing, however, is about more than just writing a newsletter and hitting SEND.

If you want to be one of the top email marketers in the world, you need to learn how to:

- Use your data to send users extremely specific, relevant messages
- Find the right moment to send each message
- Build systems to segment users, track their actions, and automatically send messages

Once you have those three things figured out, you'll have a world-class email marketing strategy.

You'll learn this in the "Email Marketing Strategy" chapter of this guide
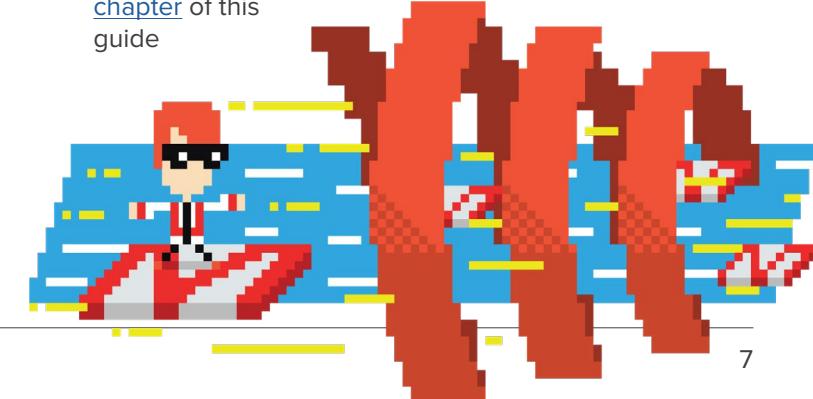
Digital Advertising: Growth by Launching Highly-Profitable Ad Campaigns

When you're a beginner, going into digital advertising poses a real chicken and egg problem.

- To learn digital advertising, you need to have a budget to spend on ads.
- But for people to trust you with their budgets, you need to have experience.

The first time I launched an ad campaign, I made a mistake that cost my client $22,362 in 18 hours.

It was a rough first week. And it almost cost me my job!

I promise you: You don't need to learn this the hard way like I did.

I'm not going to lie: digital advertising is hard and it takes a lot of trial and error (or tons of experience) to get a positive ROI.

Almost all campaigns start off being unprofitable.

What's important is that you learn, adjust, and optimize to take your campaigns to profit.

Fortunately, we've developed a framework for that.

(No "secrets", "hacks", or "tricks"— just a super straight-forward framework that you can use to launch and optimize any ad campaign).

You'll learn this in the "Digital Advertising Strategy" chapter of this guide
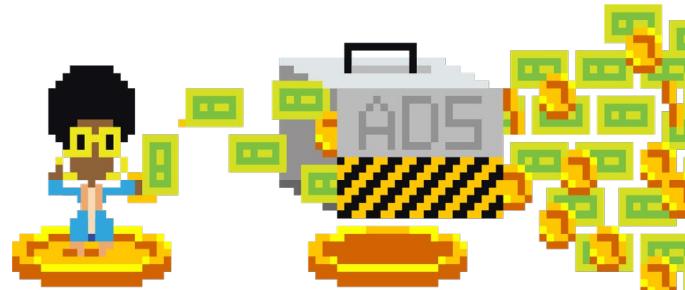
Social Media: Growth With Powerful, Metric Driven Social Media Campaigns

Every business wants to "be on social media" or "develop a social strategy."

Only a few of them know what that means.

We've been there.

When we got started, this is what we did:

1. We created accounts in a few social networks.

2. We looked up "best times to post" for each social channel.

3. We posted the same message+hashtag+image+link combo everywhere.

4. **We got zero results and abandoned our social accounts.**

Sound familiar? We made a common mistake:

Because we use social media in our daily lives, we thought we automatically knew how to use social media for business.
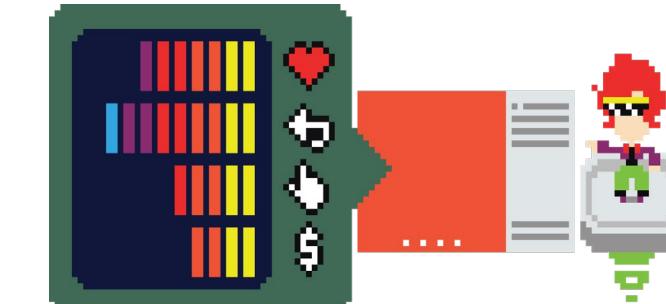
A lot has changed since those days.

To be successful at social media marketing, you need a strategy that covers three main components:

- Monitoring social channels (even when you're not actively participating)
- Creating and distributing world-class social media content
- Converting social media audiences into leads and customers

You'll learn this in the "Social Media Marketing Strategy" chapter of this guide

Web Analytics: Growth by Figuring Out What Works (and What Doesn't)

This is the most fundamental skill a digital marketer must have.

While analytics is a specialization on its own, every digital marketer must develop at least a basic level of web analytics skills to be any good.

Simply put, digital marketers rely on data to determine what works and what doesn't.

With that said, digital marketing data is definitely a double-edged sword.

With hundreds of metrics and thousands of ways to slice and dice them, it's easy to feel overwhelmed by the data—believe me, I've been there.

But guess what? I've got really good news for you.

Most businesses can get away with just FIVE metrics or less.

Yes, you read that correctly.

In most businesses (and I'm talking even massive venture-backed companies), you're much more likely to track too many metrics, than you are to track the ones that are most important for your business.

You just need to figure out which are the right five metrics to track.

A.k.a you need an analytics strategy.

You'll learn this in the "Website Analytics Strategy" chapter of this guide
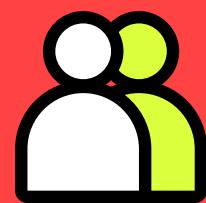
CHARACTERS: YOUR DIGITAL MARKETING JOURNEY

Here's what your path towards becoming an expert will look like.

Noob

At first, you'll be a noob—we all were at some point.

This step is about making a lot of mistakes and learning from them as quickly as possible.

There will be no other time in your career where you'll grow as much as when you're a noob—it's very tough, but it's exciting!

Think of this stage as your trial by fire. This is where most people give up.

- **You'll have no traffic or audience**
- **You'll generate no sales**
- **You'll get no jobs**

You just need to get started. Don't focus on being good, just focus on improving.

You'll read that a great digital marketer needs to specialize and we agree with that...but you'll be better off as a generalist when you're just a noob.

Try to learn about different channels before specializing in what you like the most—this will come in handy later in your career.

Professional

Once you start making a living through digital marketing, you can consider yourself a pro.

At this point, you'll probably be part of a company's marketing team, working at a digital marketing agency, or freelancing as a digital marketer.

When you're a pro, you'll focus on improving your skills further. If you've been a generalist so far, you'll probably end up specializing in a single channel.

If you don't know how to decide, pick the channel where you can have the biggest impact for a business.

Expert

Few people reach the level of expert.

Avoid a common mistake: Experts are not those who have the most Twitter followers or who speak at industry conferences.

True experts are those who can consistently generate massive results for businesses they've worked on.

Period.

At this point, you'll likely be managing a team of other digital marketers, running an agency, or growing your own business.
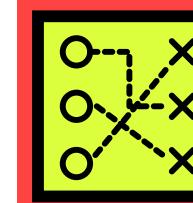
STRATEGY: HOW TO CREATE A POWERFUL DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY

Every industry, company, and digital marketing channel is different.

That's why it's not enough to know about the latest trick or hack to be successful—what works for one company might not work for the other.

If you want to create a powerful digital marketing strategy, you need to understand the fundamentals.

We've created a framework that will help you get results as quickly as possible.

The ClickMinded Digital Marketing Framework has five components:

Let's get started.

- Persona & Funnel
- Digital Asset
- Medium & Channel
- Optimization
- The Nudge

Persona and Funnel

First, you want to figure out who you're targeting (a.k.a. your target persona) and which stage of the funnel they're in.

This will make every later decision 10x easier to make.

A target persona is a representation of your ideal customer.

It's a combination of demographics (age, gender, language, location, etc.) and psychographics (interests, desires, opinions, values, etc.)

For example, a target persona might look like this:

- Johnny & Liz
- 26 years old
- About to get married
- Honeymoon planning
- Just started looking
- Care about clean eating and sustainability

Creating a target persona will help you better understand who you're marketing to—beyond just numbers like visitors, users, or sales.

Imagine if you had to write ad copy for camping equipment company based on one of these descriptions:

- Description #1: Males between 30 and 45 years old living in the US who like camping.
- Description #2: John Jones, a 40 year old business owner, father of a 10 year old, who enjoys traveling around the US in his RV going from one rock climbing spot to the next. He is deeply concerned about global warming and tries to reduce his carbon footprint as much as possible—some of the things he has done include going vegan, installing solar panels on his RV, and only buying recycled-fiber clothing.

It's pretty clear which of these will make your work easier, right?

And it's not just writing copy—ad targeting, partnerships, channel selection, budgeting, pricing...and many other decisions will be easier once you have a target persona.

The process to do this typically looks like this:

1. Find demographic data about your target customer

2. Find psychographic data about your target customer

3. Build a target persona

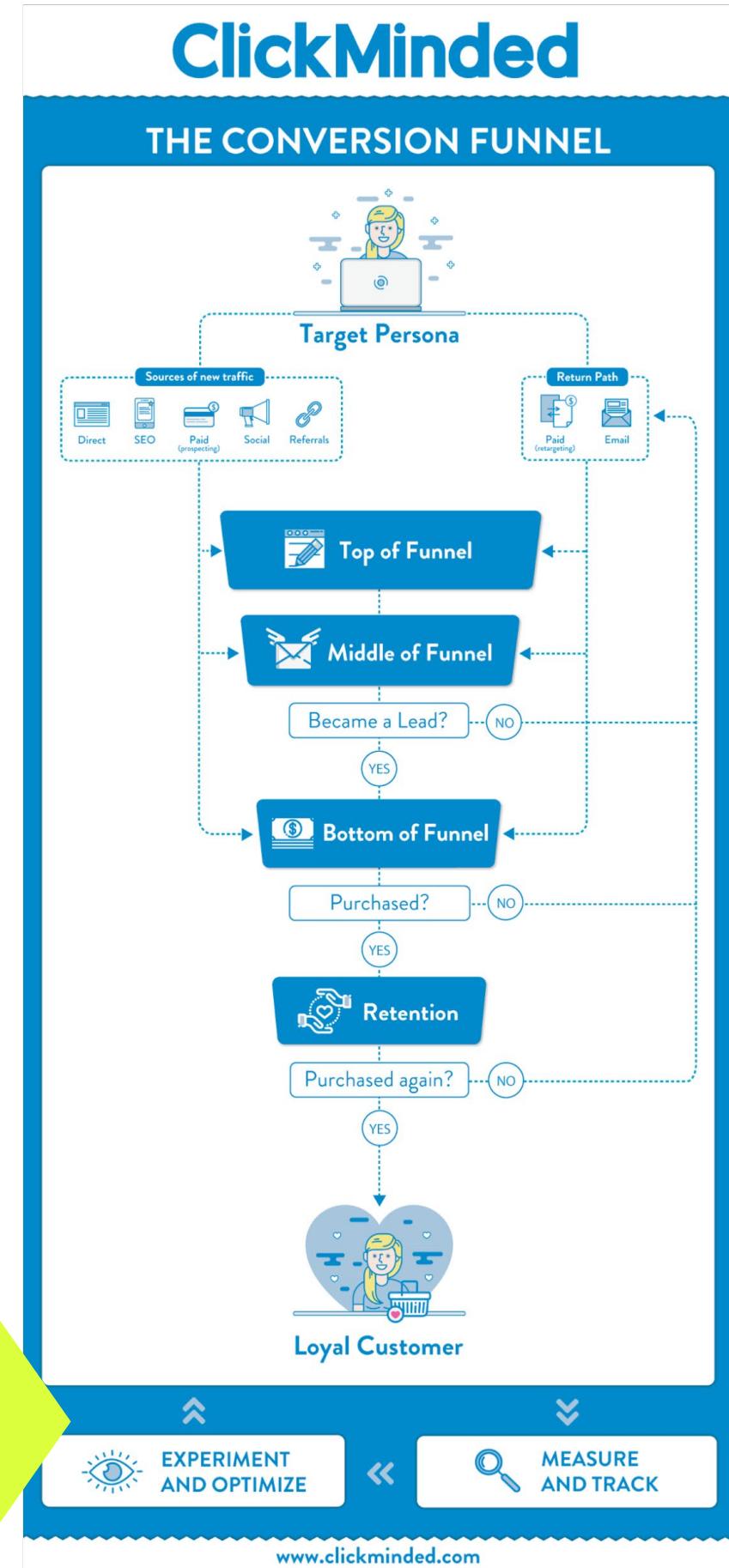4. Share with your team and keep tweaking based on new learnings

To get started with persona creation, check out these resources:

- The ClickMinded Persona Creation Mini-Course

- The Complete, Actionable Guide to Marketing Personas

- How to Create Detailed Buyer Personas for Your Business

Next, you need to figure out which stage of the sales funnel your target persona is in.

A sales funnel is just a model for how a person goes from being a complete stranger to becoming a customer, repeat buyer, and advocate for your product.

The typical sales funnel looks something like this:

ClickMinded

THE CONVERSION FUNNEL

Target Persona

Sources of new traffic: Direct, SEO, Paid (prospecting), Social, Referrals

Return Path: Paid (retargeting), Email

Top of Funnel

Middle of Funnel

Became a Lead? — NO / YES

Bottom of Funnel

Purchased? — NO / YES

Retention

Purchased again? — NO / YES

Loyal Customer

EXPERIMENT AND OPTIMIZE « MEASURE AND TRACK

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There are many different versions and variations, but this is the most basic one—and we've found that it works for almost every business.

At a high level, this is what each stage means:

- Top-of-the-funnel: This is where you seek to attract or get the attention of as many people belonging to your target audience as possible. Think of it as your "mass market" stuff.

- Middle-of-the-funnel: At this stage, your objective is to convert visitors from the top-of-the-funnel into leads. This usually consists of gathering an email or some other piece of information that will allow you to contact them again.

- Bottom-of-the-funnel: This is where you convert leads into customers. Simple.

- Retention, monetization, and love: The stage a lot of beginners forget about. This is where you try to retain customers (in subscription-based business, for example), get them to purchase the same product again or purchase a different product, or just refer other potential customers.

Your job as a digital marketer is to design, implement, and optimize tactics that take the most people from one stage of the funnel to the next.

Let's look at some examples.

Let's say your company that sells camping equipment just launched a new loyalty program.

Which of these tactics would be a better idea to promote it?

- Launch ads on national radio.

- Launch an email campaign to people who have already purchased a product.

The latter will clearly be more targeted and is likely to generate a higher return on investment.

(We'll dig deeper into this in the **"Sales Funnels Strategy" chapter** of this guide.)

I know this all sounds very theoretical so far.

But trust me.

By combining personas and sales funnels you will be able to create better digital marketing strategies that ultimately generate more **customers and sales.**

The Digital Asset

This is just a fancy way to say "the content the user will consume."

Most people immediately think of a blog post, but it doesn't have to be just that.

The digital asset you use could be a bunch of different things: an email form response, a product review, a social media post, a video image, a podcast, or an ad on social media.

Maybe it's even a digital tool that you created or a product demo.

For example, if you're targeting young gamers who also enjoy watching epic fiction series, you might decide to create a quiz titled "To which Game of Thrones family do you belong?"

Choosing a digital asset depends on who the target persona is and the stage of the funnel they're in—your job is to use this information to pick the best digital asset to use.

To learn more about creating your digital assets, read the "Content Marketing Strategy" chapter of this guide.

Medium and Channel

Once you've decided what your digital asset is going to be, the next steps are to decide where it's going to live (the **medium**), and how to distribute it (**the channel**.)

In general, the most common medium will be your own website, but it doesn't have to be.

Your medium could also be YouTube, Google Places, Yelp, Amazon, Pinterest, or maybe the App Store.

Each medium is usually fit for a specific type of digital asset.

For example, a long video is probably a better fit for YouTube than Twitter or Instagram.

When you know the medium, you need to pick the way you're going to get this asset on this medium to its target audience—in other words, pick the **channel.**

Like anything else in your strategy, your channel selection depends on decisions you've previously made.

If you picked YouTube as your channel, the ways to get traffic to your video could be YouTube SEO, YouTube Ads, getting your video embedded in other sites, or even getting other YouTubers to create videos about your video.

However, your digital asset is not the only thing that will influence your medium and channel selection.

Once again, you need to think of your persona and funnel stage.

For example, if you're targeting people who are concerned with their online privacy and looking for a secure chat service...

...it might be a bad idea to create a social media ad for them since a lot of them are probably using ad blockers and privacy plugins.

Optimization

This is, very simply, just doing everything you need to do to maximize the number of users who get your asset through the channel you picked.

If you pick digital advertising to drive traffic to a landing page, optimization will include things like testing ad graphics, copy, placement, targeting, budget, etc.

If you pick SEO to drive traffic to a blog post, optimization will include things like performing keyword research, optimizing your post content, building links, and fixing technical issues.

If you pick email marketing to drive webinar registration, optimization will include things like testing subject lines, calls-to-action, send times, and subscriber segmentation.

You get the point.

Each channel is a different animal—you need to learn how to get the most out of the one you choose to use.

Once you've picked a channel, get started by checking out its corresponding chapter:

- Chapter 4: The SEO Strategy Guide
- Chapter 5: The Email Marketing Strategy Guide
- Chapter 6: The Digital Advertising Strategy Guide
- Chapter 7: The Social Media Strategy Guide

The Nudge

This is the most important aspect of the framework.

In simple terms, the nudge is how you push users to the next logical step down the funnel.
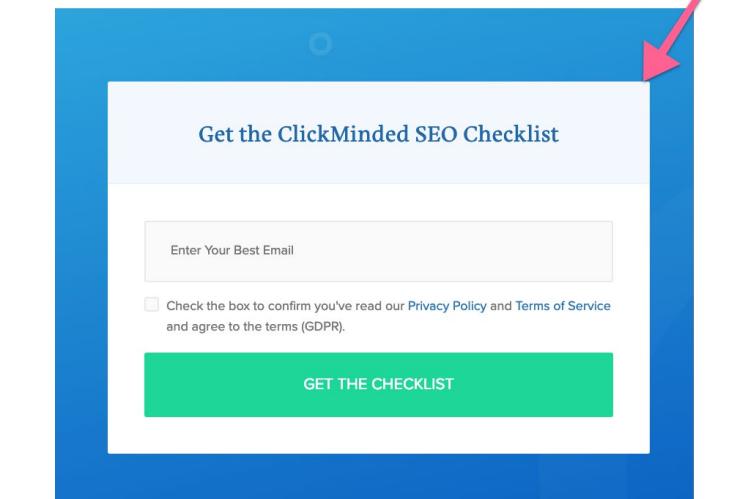
The nudge is about getting results.

It's not enough that you get people to consume your asset.

A great digital marketer always has to think about what the next step is.

If you have a blog post that's attracting a ton of new traffic (top-of-the-funnel), a nudge could be a call-to-action to download a bonus in exchange for an email address (middle-of-the-funnel).

If you have a webinar with a lot of attendees (middle-of-the-funnel), a nudge could be an offer to enroll with a limited-time discount (bottom-of-the-funnel).

Get the ClickMinded SEO Checklist

Enter Your Best Email

Check the box to confirm you've read our Privacy Policy and Terms of Service and agree to the terms (GDPR).

GET THE CHECKLIST

Whatever digital asset you create, you need to think about how it will help you get your users closer to purchasing.

To get started and learn more about nudges, check out the ClickMinded Sales Funnel Mini-Course.

Putting it All Together

So how does all this work together?

Here's how you can use this framework to create an entire digital marketing strategy:

1. Pick one target **persona** and start at the top-of-the-funnel

2. Define the **digital asset** you'll use

3. Decide your **medium** (where you will put your asset) and channel (how will you get people to view your asset)

4. Determine the steps necessary for you to **optimize** and get the most out of the channel and medium you chose

5. Figure out the **nudge** you'll use to take people to the next stage of the funnel

6. Repeat steps 1 through 5 for the other stages of the funnel

7. Repeat steps 1 through 6 for your other target personas (if you have more than one)

If you want to learn how we do these seven steps and get a template to create your entire strategy, check out our free Digital Marketing Strategy Masterclass.

I will never get tired of saying this.

The most effective way to become a digital marketer is by doing digital marketing.

Here are a couple of ways you can get some hands-on experience when you're just getting started:

- **Start your own website or blog.** This is what we recommend and how I got started. By starting from scratch, you'll have a better understanding of how everything works than if you were to walk onto something that's already been built. Plus, you won't have to worry too much about messing up.
Protip: If you go with this route, just stick to a Wordpress.org site.

- **Find a business you can help.** Maybe there's a business you already work for, a friend's company, or a small business in the place where you live. Don't go for the company of your dreams yet—you're probably not ready. This option has its advantages since you will be able to see results (or lack thereof) faster and might be able to find someone to mentor you.
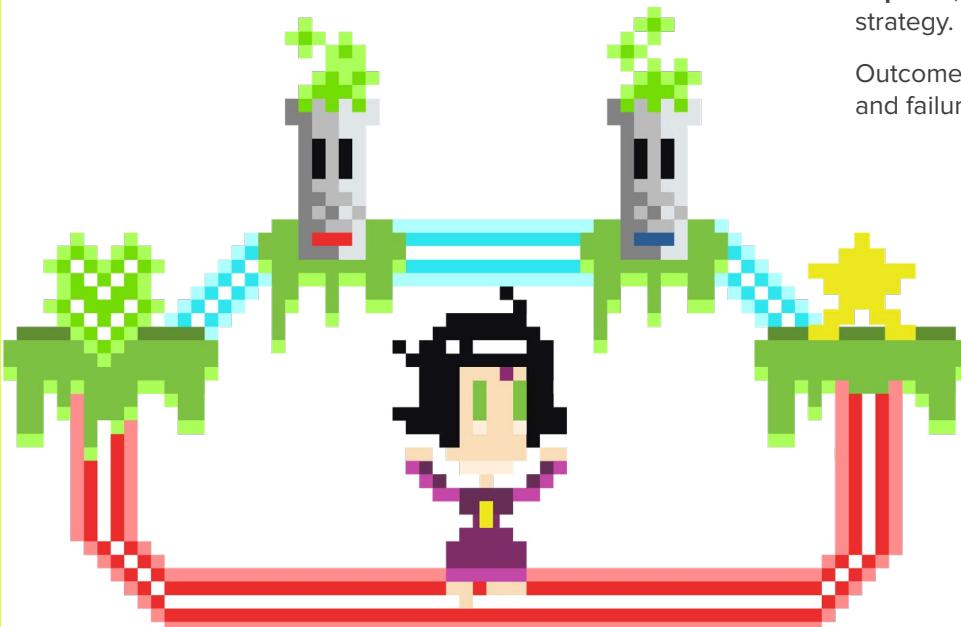
Once you've figured that out, here's how to move forward:

1. **Finish reading this guide.**

   Outcome: You will have a fundamental understanding of how digital marketing works. The last section of this chapter ("Traps") is especially important if you're new to this.

2. **Create a rough draft of a digital marketing strategy.** Focus on just one or two channels and tackle one funnel stage at a time.

   Outcome: You will have a clear game plan for how you will attract traffic, convert traffic into leads, leads into customers, and customers into advocates.

3. **Set yourself a goal and a timeframe.** For each tactic you test, define a goal (e.g. traffic, followers, sales, etc.) and a period of time when you expect to hit the goal.

   Outcome: You will have an easy way to know whether your efforts are working as expected or not. Plus, you'll gradually get better at setting up goals and targets.

4. **Review what worked, what didn't, how to improve**, and revisit your digital marketing strategy.

   Outcome: You will learn from your successes and failures and use that input to get better.

When you have little experience, this industry can be hard to navigate.

There is waaay too much (bad) information out there...

...so we put together a list of traps you should avoid:

Reading Too Many Shitty Blog Posts

It won't take long before you'll start to notice that there are way too many digital marketing bloggers writing about the latest "tactic you need to use", a "mistake you're probably making", or a "secret hack that generated 300% growth in 7 days."

You should avoid these.

I'll write that again in all caps.

AVOID THESE AT ALL COSTS.

Most of these posts don't aim to teach you something valuable...

...their objective is merely to get your attention.

If they succeed, you'll probably end up wasting a lot of time just reading blog posts, and feeling anxious about missing out on the latest trick.

Bottom line: **Stop reading digital marketing blogs. Start doing digital marketing instead.**

Which makes for a good segway into the next trap.
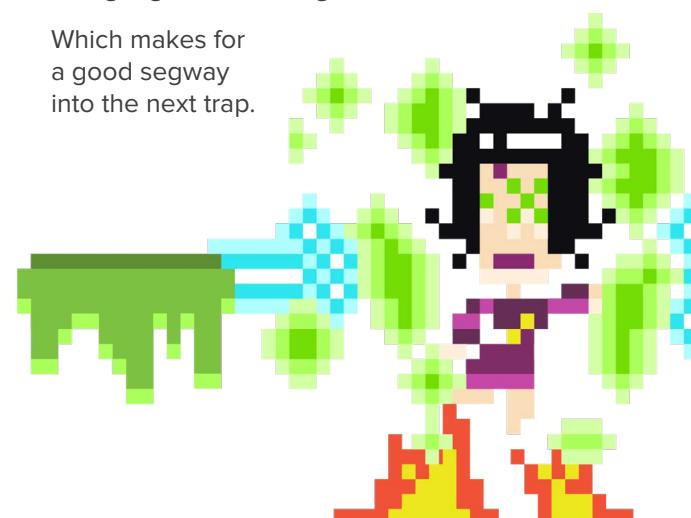
Not Executing What You Learn

When you start learning digital marketing, it's easy to go down a rabbit hole, feeling like you need to know "just a bit more" before you're ready to implement.

Digital marketing is a practical discipline.

If you want to be any good at it, you need to get your hands dirty and do the work. The best way to learn is to just get started as soon as possible.

Whenever you hit a roadblock, research how to get past it, and then keep going.

You should eventually develop a healthy balance of execution and learning that you'll maintain for the rest of your career.

Thinking Credentials or Degrees Matter

This is a mistake people who follow more traditional career paths tend to make.

Digital marketing is not a discipline where credentials matter.

It doesn't really matter if you have a digital marketing degree or certification.

The only thing that matters is that you can **get results.**

If you're planning on spending a lot of money on a master's degree in digital marketing or certification, our advice is simple: **Don't.**

You can get a better education online for a fraction of the cost—and use the rest of the money to start your own website and get some actual experience.

Disclaimer: ClickMinded does offer certifications. However, we're very upfront about the fact that you don't need them. We keep them because some clients use our courses for internal training and use the certifications as a way to check on their employees' progress.

2 THE SALES FUNNEL STRATEGY GUIDE

The ultimate tutorial on **how to massively increase revenue with powerful sales funnels**, as quickly as possible.
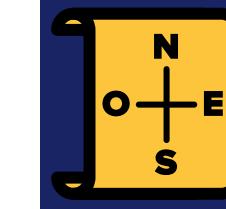
WORLD MAP: WHAT IS A SALES FUNNEL?

9 times out of 10, fixing a digital marketing strategy that isn't working comes down to doing one simple thing:

Stop being weird.

If you're new to digital marketing, it's pretty easy to forget that behind clicks and conversion rates, there are real people.

Has this happened to you?

1. You visit a website to read a blog post

2. Multiple banners and popups suddenly cover your screen, offering you coupons for a product you've never heard of

3. You get annoyed, ignore them, continue reading, and leave without paying any attention to the ads

The digital marketer running those ads is probably wondering why no one is purchasing what he's trying to sell.

You know the reason.

You didn't come to the site to read some ads, you didn't know the product being offered, and you certainly didn't need a coupon for it.

If this was a real-life interaction, it would be like a stranger on the subway asking you if you want to get matching lower back tattoos.

Weird.

Why am I telling you all of this?

Because creating an optimized sales funnel for your business - with your users in mind - is how you solve this problem (and how you stop yourself from being weird).

A sales funnel is a model for how to progressively build relationships with people that take them from complete strangers to advocates of your brand and product...
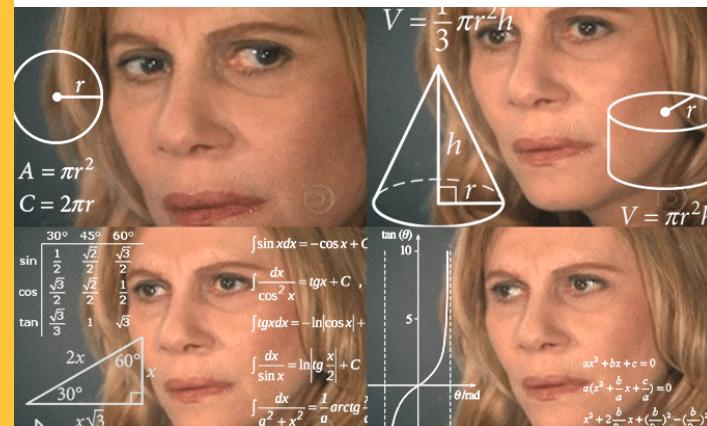
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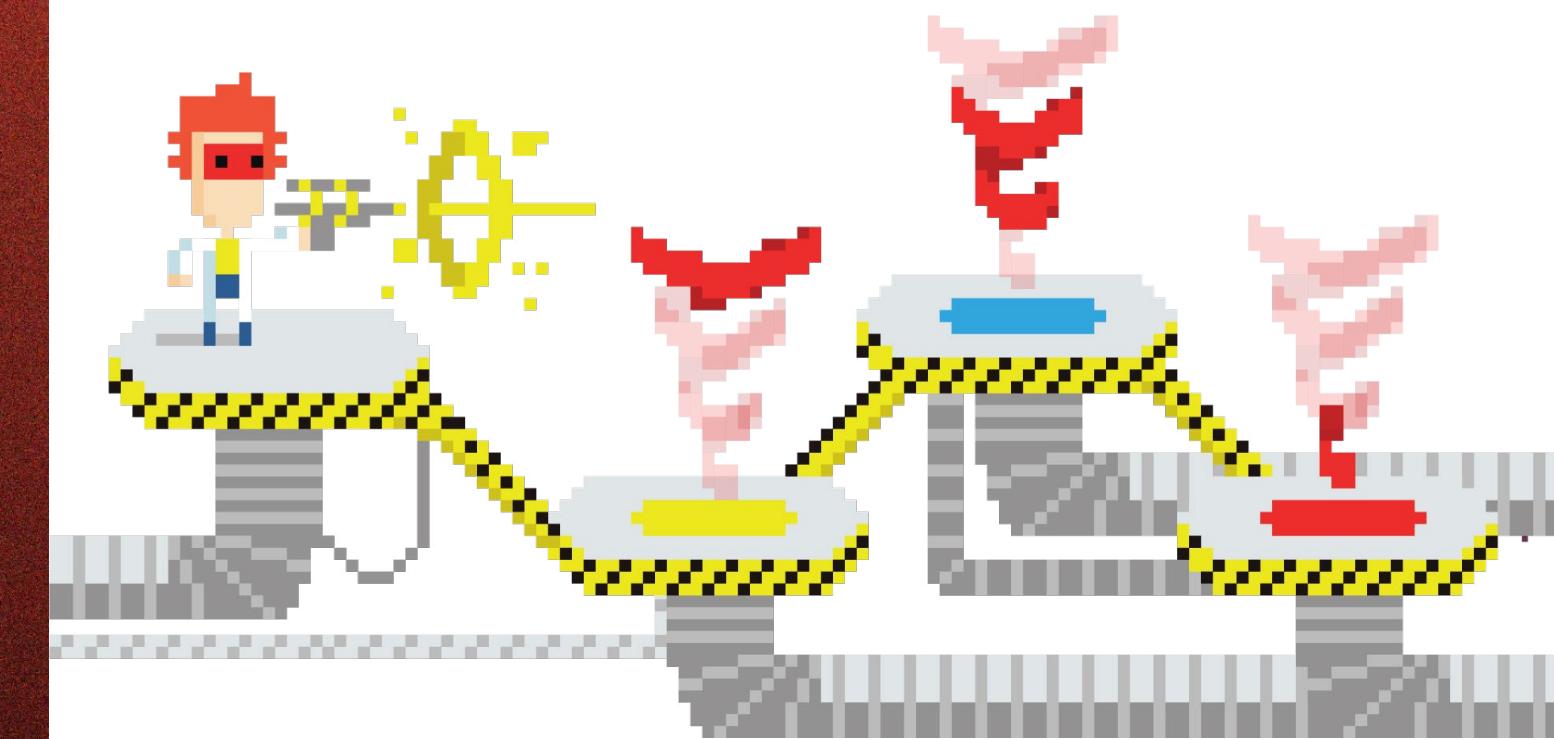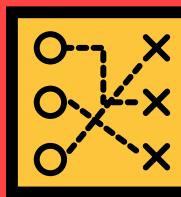
STRATEGY: BUILDING A POWERFUL SALES FUNNEL

There are a ton of blog posts out there proposing different and complicated sales funnel models.

Some will tell you that you HAVE to use their software to do it right.

Others will say sales funnels are obsolete, and that a NEW method is better.

It can be incredibly confusing.

Let's call it like it is:

Most of this is just a distraction when you're first getting started.

I find that the core principles of the most simple model still hold and will work for every type of business.
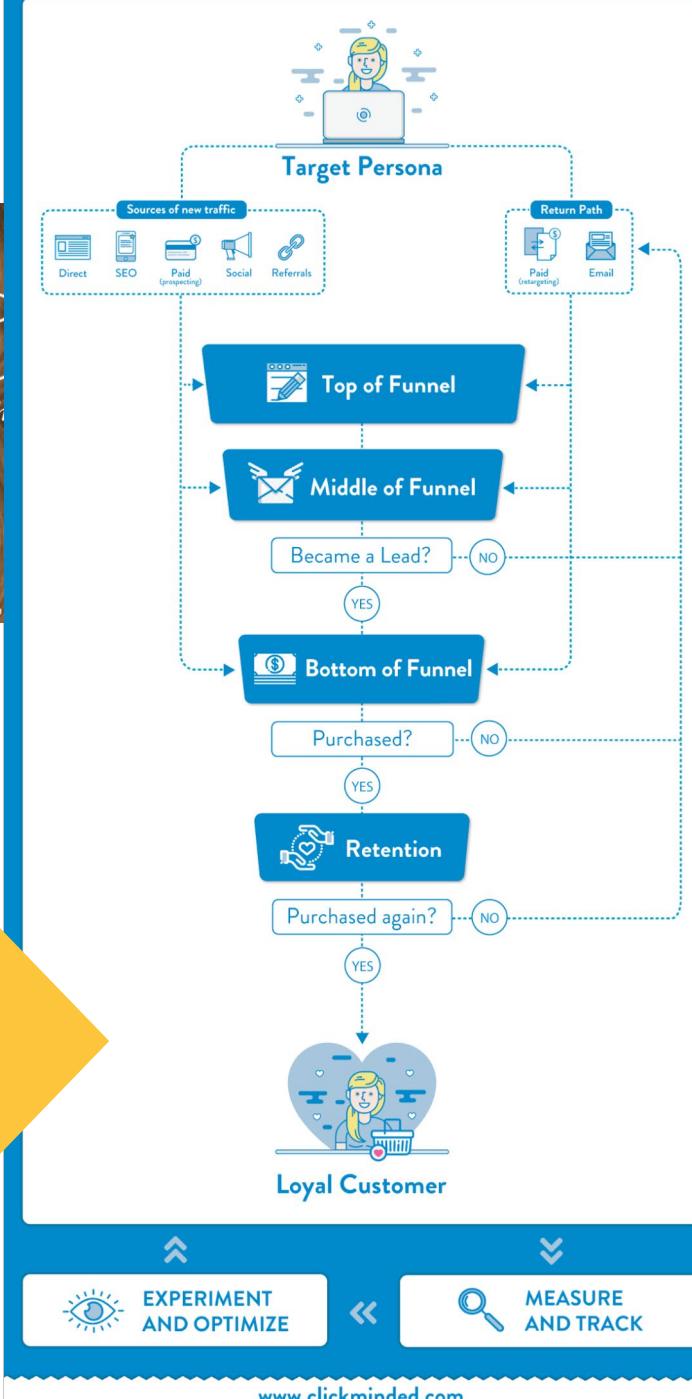
The basic sales funnel looks like this:

The advantage of using a sales funnel when designing your digital marketing strategy is that you get a simple and straightforward set of goals that you need to hit.

Building a powerful sales funnel means picking the right tactics at each stage of the funnel to hit those goals.

Next, let's go over each stage of the funnel.

ClickMinded

THE CONVERSION FUNNEL

Target Persona

Sources of new traffic: Direct, SEO, Paid (prospecting), Social, Referrals

Return Path: Paid (retargeting), Email

- Top of Funnel
- Middle of Funnel
- Became a Lead? — NO / YES
- Bottom of Funnel
- Purchased? — NO / YES
- Retention
- Purchased again? — NO / YES
- Loyal Customer

EXPERIMENT AND OPTIMIZE   MEASURE AND TRACK

www.clickminded.com

Top-of-the-Funnel

Think of the top-of-the-funnel as your "mass market" stuff.

Your goal here is to attract a lot of traffic (people) to your website, listing, YouTube channel, podcast, TikTok account, SoundCloud, or whatever else you damn kids are using these days.
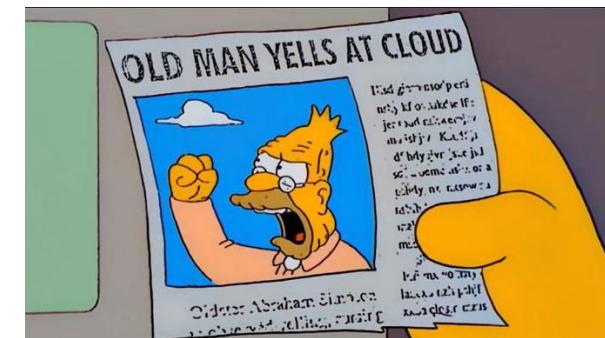
In traditional marketing, a top-of-the-funnel tactic might be a TV ad or a billboard on the highway.

In digital marketing, some tactics you can use include:

- Creating and optimizing content for search engines
- Launching digital advertising campaigns on AdWords or Facebook
- Posting content on social media networks that attracts and engages followers
- Developing cross-promotion partnerships with another business
- Getting press coverage on digital media

You can get really creative here—as long as it helps you get relevant, new people to view your content, it's a valid top-of-the-funnel tactic.

Middle-of-the-Funnel

The middle-of-the-funnel is all about converting traffic into leads and then nurturing them.

A lead is someone who has shown interest in your content and who you can contact in order to nurture the relationship.

The key is being able to contact them.

So the main goal of the middle-of-the-funnel is to get as many people as possible from the top-of-the-funnel to give you a piece of contact information that you can use to reach out to them at a later time.

Converting traffic into leads could be someone signing up to your email newsletter, scheduling a call, becoming a social media follower, agreeing to receive push notifications, downloading an app, enrolling in a free trial, subscribing to a YouTube channel, etc.

By giving you a piece of contact information, these people are expressing interest in what you do/offer.

This is a great time for you to build trust and prepare them for your bottom-of-the-funnel offer.

In digital marketing, some tactics you can use in the middle-of-the-funnel include:

- Offering bonus content in exchange for an email address (this is what's known in the industry as a lead magnet)
- Verbally telling viewers of your YouTube videos to subscribe to your channel
- Creating a free trial, consultation, or demo of a product that users need to sign up for
- Hosting a live webinar about an interesting topic
- Sending email newsletters with valuable content to subscribers
- Getting users to buy a low-dollar offer (this is what's known in the industry as a tripwire offer)
- Launching a Facebook remarketing campaign for visitors to your site

Again, you can get super creative here—you'll probably need to try a bunch of these tactics (and fail a lot!) before you find the one that works for you, your business, your industry and your users.

This is where the magic happens. It's time to get down to business.

Your main goal at the bottom-of-the-funnel is to move the metrics that matter for a business' bottom line.

Here, you'll push the leads you collected in the middle-of-the-funnel towards taking a specific action:

- For a digital business like an e-commerce site, that might be purchasing

- For a physical business like a doctor's practice, that might be booking appointments

- For a two-sided marketplace like Airbnb, that might be both booking a place to stay (for guests) and creating a new listing (for hosts)

Figure out what's most important for the business you're working on and implement tactics that help you move that number in the right direction.

In digital marketing, some bottom funnel tactics might be:

- Reducing the number of fields on your checkout form

- Launching a limited-time or seasonal discount

- Bundling different products at a special price

- Implementing an affiliate program for other people to promote your products

- Launching an email or Facebook ad campaign for cart abandonments

- Adding testimonials or social proof to your sales and checkout page

There's a common misconception when it comes to the bottom-of-the-funnel.

A lot of people think that optimizing for the bottom-of-the-funnel is limited to the checkout page on your website: Stuff like changing the color of a button.

Just take a look at the examples above and you'll see that view is too narrow.

If you just stick to fixing your checkout process, you'll miss 99% of the opportunities to improve your bottom-of-the-funnel stage.

This is perhaps the most overlooked stage of the funnel.

Here's what this stage is about:

- **Retention** refers to keeping a customer around. In a subscription-based business like Netflix, retention tactics are aimed at reducing the number of subscribers who cancel their subscription. In businesses that don't use subscriptions, retention refers to reducing the number of refunds.

- **Monetization** refers to increasing a customer's lifetime value—this is a metric of the total amount of revenue generated by each customer. For example, if you're running an e-commerce website, you can try to get existing customers to repurchase.

- **Love refers** to getting existing customers to advocate for your product and recommend them to other people and businesses they know. A famous example of this is how Dropbox offered additional storage space to users who referred friends to their service.

Most of the blog posts and case studies you'll find online are about one of the three stages of the funnel you read about above ("how to increase traffic by X%" or "how I generated $ZZZ in 5 days").

But the retention, monetization, and love stage is usually where you can make the biggest impact for the least amount of work.
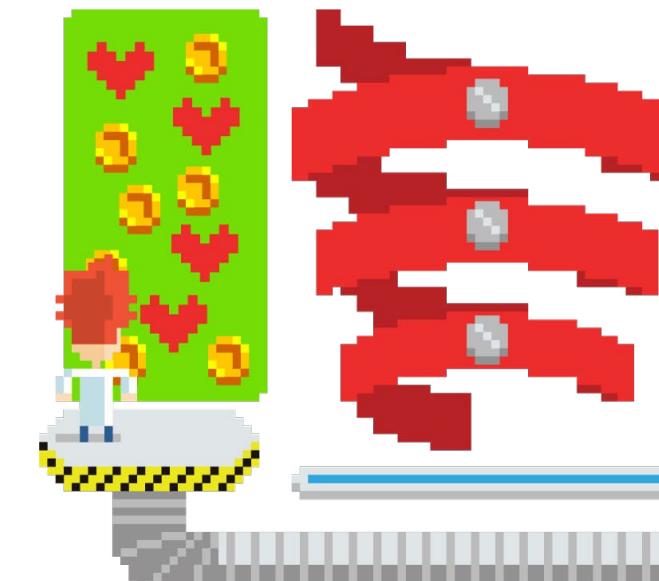
It's simple.

In this stage, you're dealing with people who have already trusted you enough to become a customer.

They likely already know what you offer and why it's better than other options out there.

So convincing this segment of people to stay around (retention), buy more (monetization), and recommend you (love) is easier than achieving the same things with a complete stranger.

Look at it this way: Who is more likely to say you're handsome/beautiful?

1. Your mom/dad/boyfriend/girlfriend/husband/wife

2. A stranger on the street

Exactly.

In digital marketing, some retention, monetization, and love tactics might be:

- Upselling or cross-selling customers on supplementary products

- Launching a referral or loyalty program

- Implementing product onboarding so new users learn how to use your product

- Checking in on your customers to ask if they are satisfied with their purchase

- Offering discounts for annual plans vs. monthly plans (for subscription services)

- Congratulating your customers on their birthday

There is a caveat to this stage of the funnel.

If you're working on a business that's just getting started, you shouldn't focus too much on retention, monetization, and love.

Get customers first. Work on this later.

Expressways & Return Paths

These are not stages of the funnel, but ways to move people through the stages.

The funnel model lays out a neat way for moving people from one stage to the next...

...in theory.

Real life doesn't work that way.

People are messy.

And while you might want everyone to follow a certain path, things will probably look more like herding cats.

- Some people will go straight from the top-of-the-funnel to the bottom.
- But others will get to the bottom and go back to the top.
- Plus, a lot of people will just reach a certain stage and drop off altogether.

That's why you need to build expressways and return paths.

Expressways are paths that allow people to jump stages of the funnel and convert faster without necessarily passing through all the stages.

If you have someone who wants to purchase right after visiting your site, it's inefficient to require them to register to a webinar before they get the opportunity to enroll.

Expressways make sure you don't miss out on any easy conversions.

In digital marketing, these might look like:

- Publishing a pricing page so users don't need to request a quote
- Allowing users to purchase your product or service directly from the site
- Adding live chat or a chatbot to your site, so visitors can get faster answers to their questions before purchasing

- Allowing users to click a link in an email in order to receive the next one in a series (instead of having to wait a few days)

Return paths are ways to get people who have fallen out of the funnel, gotten stuck on a stage, or moved back a stage, and push them to continue moving down the funnel.

Most people won't follow the exact path you designed on your funnel. But letting people just fall out of the funnel without making an attempt to recover them isn't efficient for your business.

Return paths allow you to increase the efficiency of your funnel.

In digital marketing, these are some examples of return paths:

- A Facebook remarketing campaign for people who added an item to cart but didn't complete a purchase
- A newsletter that re-engages people who stopped moving through your funnel
- A lot of the tactics used for expressways and return paths might belong to one or several stages of the funnel.

But thinking about expressways and return paths separately will help you avoid unconsciously adding inefficiencies to your funnel.
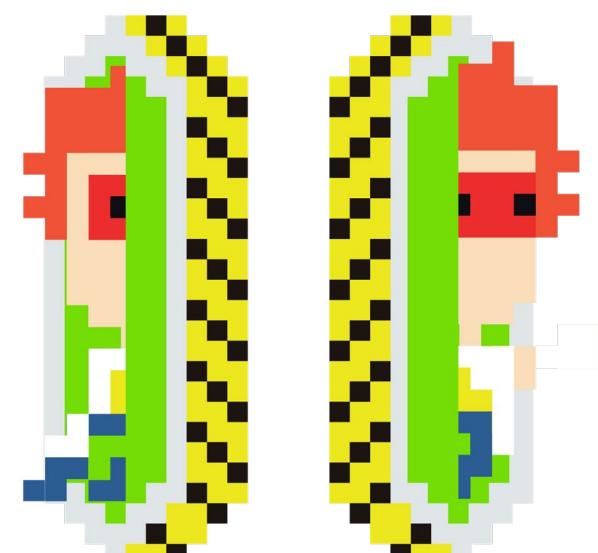
STATS: HOW TO KNOW IF YOUR SALES FUNNEL IS WORKING

Designing and optimizing sales funnels is a lot of work, so you will deal with broader metrics.

More specific metrics will depend on the specific tactics you use at each stage of the funnel—you should probably analyze these individually and not as a part of the analysis of your funnel's performance.

As a reminder, your goals at each stage of the funnel are usually:

- **Top-of-the-funnel:** Get more relevant traffic
- **Middle-of-the-funnel**: Get more leads
- **Bottom-of-the-funnel:** Get more sales
- **Retention, monetization, and love:** Increase customer lifetime value

Let's dig into each one.
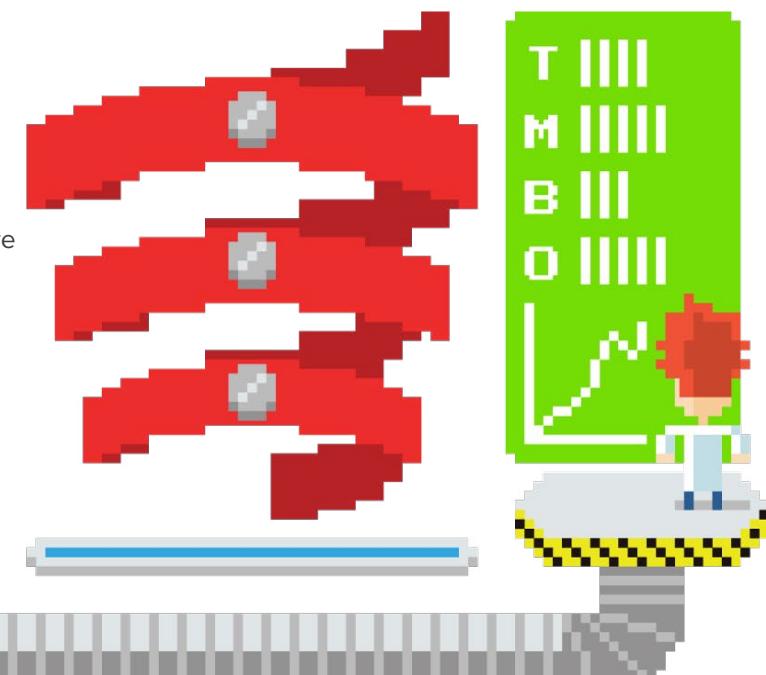
Traffic (Top-of-the-Funnel)

It doesn't matter if you have heavily optimized your middle and bottom-of-the-funnel if no one views your content at the top-of-the-funnel.

At the very top-of-the-funnel, your objective is to get your content in front of as many people within your target market as possible.

It's worth saying this again: Get your content in front of as many people as possible - **within your target market.**

Naturally, traffic is a pretty good metric for the top-of-the-funnel...

...but even a million visits per day are useless unless they belong to your target audience.

For example, if you run a website for a local hardware store in the US, it won't help your business to attract traffic from Canada or Mexico.

Protip: Even if you don't run a website, there are metrics similar to traffic for most platforms that you can use for the top-of-the-funnel. For example, a YouTube channel owner can track views and an Instagram account owner can track impressions.

Bounce Rate (Top-of-the-Funnel)

High engagement is a good indicator that the traffic you are attracting is actually interested in your content...

And bounce rate is a good metric to use as a proxy for engagement.

Bounce rate is calculated by the percentage of people who leave your site without interacting with it.

You can think of it as people who visited, said "meh, not what I was looking for," and left.

A lower bounce rate usually means higher engagement or, in other words, that your content is relevant to the people viewing it.

Bounce rates are also used by many algorithms that will impact your top-of-the-funnel efforts. A high bounce rate can cause lower search engine rankings and higher costs for your ad campaigns.

Instead of just looking at traffic at the top-of-the-funnel, consider bounce rate a part of your mix of metrics.

New Leads (Middle-of-the-Funnel)

Your main goal at the middle-of-the-funnel is to gather as many leads as possible from your top of funnel traffic.

Depending on your business, the way that you track new leads will vary:

If an email subscriber is considered a lead, then you could track your subscriber growth

If a lead is defined by a relevant action on your site, then you could set up conversion tracking for that action with Google Analytics

If a person becomes a lead after being qualified by a sales rep, then you could count the number of new opportunities in Salesforce (or any CRM your company uses)

The most important things for lead tracking are:

Everyone in the company or marketing team should be aware of what constitutes a lead

It should be easy to find out how many leads there are and how many are added over time

Sales (Bottom-of-the-Funnel)

This one should be pretty self-explanatory.

The one misconception we see people have is that they don't track anything on the bottom-of-the-funnel for one of these two reasons:

1. They work at a non-profit
2. They don't make sales online

If you work at a non-profit, you should find an equivalent metric to track and optimize; donations, ticket sales, etc.

If you don't make sales online, you should still track sales because you're responsible for the amount and quality of the leads you get through the site.

Average Order Value (Bottom-of-the-Funnel)

Just as you track sales, you should keep an eye on how much, on average, each customer spends when you make a sale.

A low average order value is not necessarily bad—a business can make a lot of money by selling lots of cheap products.

But keeping an eye on this metric helps you identify which kinds of products you're selling more of, which types of customers you're better at converting, or which promotions are more successful at converting customers.

Knowing your average order value is also helpful in making forecasts or estimates.

For example, if you know each customer spends an average of $10, then you know you'll need about 1,000 of them to generate $10k in revenue.

Churn (Retention)

Subscription-based revenue models are becoming more and more popular every day.

For those types of businesses, it's critical to track churn.

Churn is the metric for the percentage of people who cancel a subscription during a period of time.

It's calculated as the number of people who cancel a subscription during a period, divided by the total number of customers at the beginning of that period.

A high churn rate means that you'll need to invest resources into retention—your job is to keep churn as low as possible.

Customer Lifetime Value (Retention)

This metric sounds more complicated than it really is.

Customer lifetime value represents the total amount of revenue generated by a specific customer during the entire span of their relationship with your company.

- If a customer signs up for a $40 monthly subscription and cancels after the third month, their lifetime value will be $120 ($40x3)
- If a customer buys product A for $100 in month 1 and product B for $50 in month 6, their customer lifetime value will be $150 ($100 + $50)
- If a customer buys a product for $50, then asks for a refund and never comes back, their customer lifetime value is $0

Your objective is to increase customer lifetime value as much as possible.

Which tools you'll use to build your funnel will depend on the tactics you decide to implement at each stage of the funnel.

However, there are a couple of tools you'll find helpful when working on your funnel strategy and optimization.

- Google Analytics: The most popular web analytics tool in the world. By setting up goals and events, you'll be able to track the performance of your sales funnel (among many other things.)

  Check out Google Analytics and the "Website Analytics Strategy" chapter of this guide
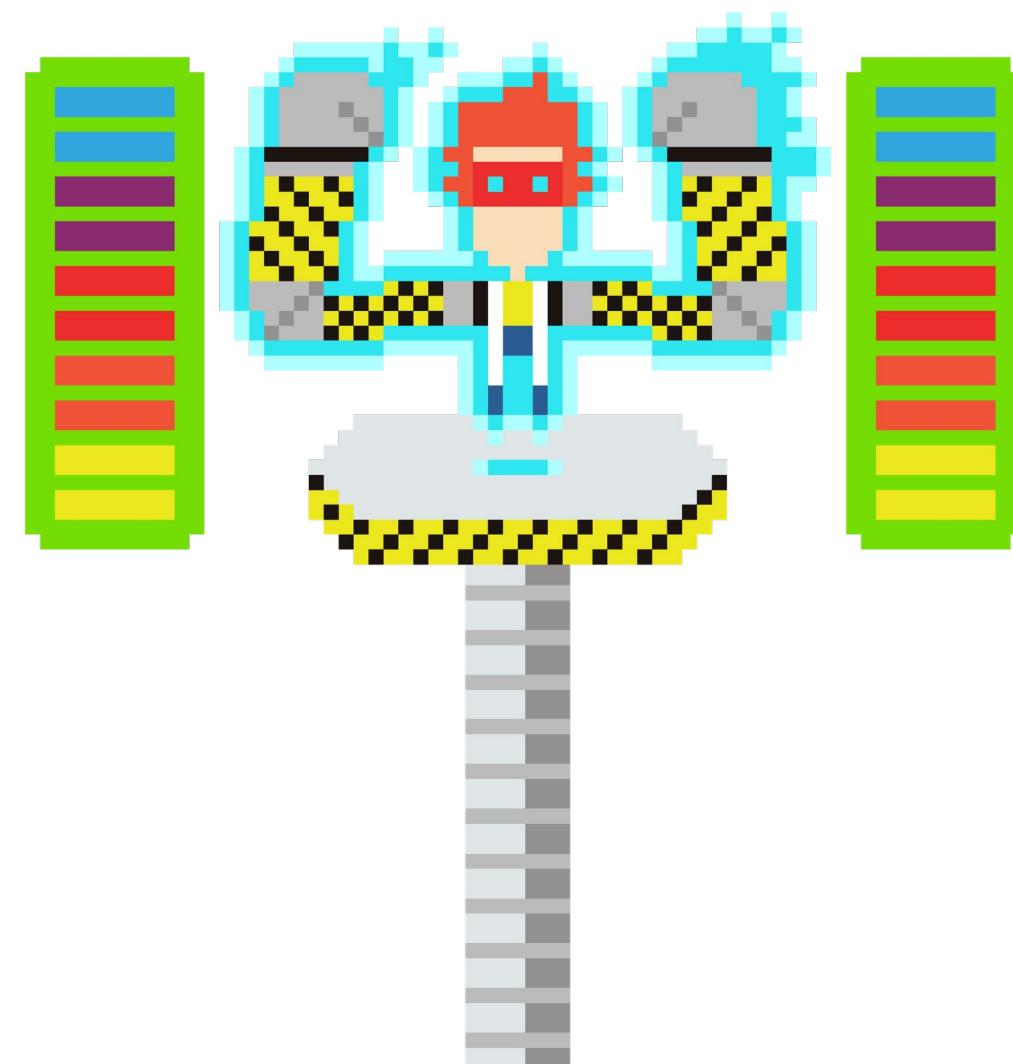
- Funnelytics: As you build and add elements to your funnel, keeping track of how everything works can get complicated. Funnelytics makes it easy to create visualizations of how your funnel works that you can use for documentation or share with your team.

  Check out Funnelytics

The first thing you'll need to do is find a company or business to build a sales funnel for. Here are a couple of ways to do that:

- **Build a sales funnel for your own business.** If you already have a business, you can simply use what you've learned to grow it.

- **Start your own website or blog.** If you don't have a business, this is the next best thing (and how I got started.) By starting from scratch, you'll have more freedom to experiment and you won't have to worry too much about messing up. On the downside, you will probably have a harder time finding an audience to get started with.

- **Find a business you can help.** Maybe there is a business you already work for, a friend's company, or a small business in the place where you live. This option has its advantages since you will be able to see results (or lack thereof) faster and might be able to find someone to mentor you.

Once you've figured that out, here's how to move forward:

1. Finish reading **this guide**, of course.

   Outcome: You will have a fundamental understanding of how sales funnels work and how to build them. The last section of the guide ("Traps") is especially important if you're new to digital marketing.

2. Create a **list of all the possible tactics** you can come up with that will help you build your funnel (doing webinars, optimizing content for search engines, seeking partnerships, etc.) If possible, ask other people in the company for ideas as well.

   Outcome: You will have a entire pipeline of growth experiments to roll out for several weeks or months.

3. Next to each tactic, **determine which stage of the funnel each tactic belongs to.**

   Outcome: This will help you establish the first level of priorities for your experiments. For example, if the business has a lot of traffic but not enough leads, then you should probably start with middle-of-the-funnel experiments; or if the business is brand new, you should start with the top-of-the-funnel before testing bottom-of-the-funnel experiments.

4. **Assign scores** (from 1 to 5) for difficulty of implementation and level of impact. If a tactic is too hard to implement, give it a difficulty score of 1. If a tactic is likely to significantly benefit the business, give it an impact score of 5.

   Outcome: Once you know which stage of the funnel to tackle first, these scores will help you prioritize the order in which you roll out your experiments.

5. Set a **goal** and a **timeframe.** For each tactic you test, define a goal (e.g. traffic, followers, sales, etc.) and a period of time when you expect to hit the goal.

   Outcome: You will have an easy way to know whether your efforts are working as expected or not. Plus, you'll gradually get better at setting up goals and targets.

6. **Reverse engineer** best practices. Once you know which tactic you'll test, look for people and companies using that tactic successfully to learn how they are doing it (ask around to find these!) Adapt (don't steal) what you learn to your business. Protip: Don't read blog posts about the tactic—most of these will have very shallow and unhelpful advice.

   Outcome: You will have a better understanding of how to successfully launch each tactic, instead of having to figure everything out from scratch.

7. **Implement** your tactics.

   Outcome: Pretty self-explanatory.

8. **Review what works,** what doesn't, how to improve. Cut what doesn't work, and move on to the next experiment.

   Outcome: You will learn from your successes and failures and use that experience to build your sales funnel.

TRAPS: AVOID THESE SALES FUNNEL TRAPS

Building funnels is a lot of work.

You will fail **many times** before you succeed.

It's not uncommon to try a lot of things that don't work. Or even to try the same thing 10 times before it starts to work.

But when you find the thing that works, it can dramatically change the direction of a business.

These are some mistakes we made when we were getting started. Avoid these and save yourself a few headaches.

## Focusing on the Wrong Stage of the Funnel

This is, by far, the most common mistake.

Be aware of where your efforts will have the biggest impact for the business.

If the business doesn't have any traffic or leads, it's a waste of time to try and make the checkout process easier.

If the business is already converting 15% of its leads into customers, it's better to work on doubling the number of leads than trying to increase the conversion rate to customers by one percentage point.

Figure out where the holes are in the funnel and work on that.
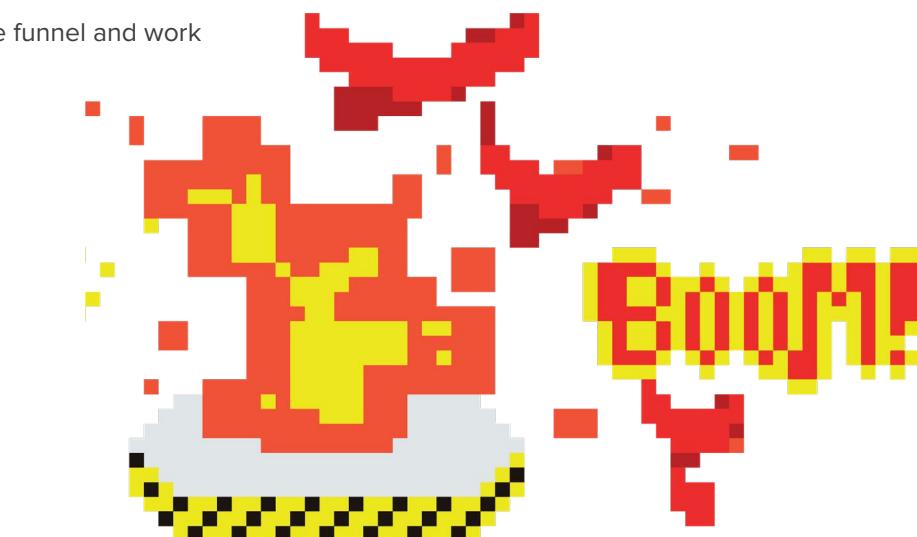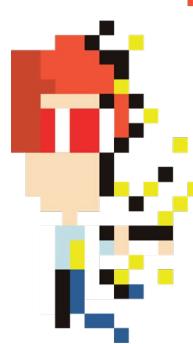
Trying to Copy Successful Case Studies

"How we increased conversion rate by 47% with this simple tactic."

"How this company went from zero to $50 million in 2 years."

A few weeks into digital marketing, you'll start noticing headlines like those everywhere.

Before you jump into trying to replicate these tactics, keep in mind:

What works for another company might not work for yours. Even if they are within the same industry.

People who write these articles can (and will, usually) pick a way to calculate and present results to make them look way more impressive than they really are.

These companies usually leave important details out of the content, to protect themselves against competition.

Case studies are a great source of inspiration for your own funnel, but nothing more than that.

If it was as easy as copying case studies, everyone would be swimming in money.

Getting Too Cute

I fell for this stuff all the time.

And it's caused by the proliferation of "growth hacking" content.

Headlines like "This company used chatbots to generate 30% more sales" can make you feel like you're missing out on a huge opportunity by not using chatbots.

Same thing happens with the latest social media channel, marketing tool, trending tactic, or "growth hack".

We call this "trying to get too cute".

What we mean is that it's better to stick to the basics before trying to build something super complicated or paying for an expensive tool.

Here are some examples:

Before you try to add a chatbot to your site, maybe try adding a contact form and see if people will actually reach out for help.

Before you try to build a complicated email sequence, try sending it to a small group of subscribers to test if it actually works.

Once you validate that a basic idea is worth pursuing, you can start adding more complexity to it—not before.

Thinking You Can't Build Funnels for YOUR Type of Business

I was actually surprised by this one, but I stumbled upon it so many times that it's worth adding to the list of traps.

It's easy for people to think their business is unique and that a lot of the things mentioned in this guide won't work for them.

Non-profits are a great example of this.

Just because a company isn't optimizing for profit, doesn't mean they can't build a funnel.

A (good) non-profit still has objectives it wants to meet: An amount of donations, a number of attendees at an event, a number of people/animals/buildings/organizations/communities to help.

You can build funnels to hit all of those goals.

What's described in this guide is a broad set of principles to help you lay out a path, for people to perform an action, that will benefit the company you work for—it doesn't matter if that's an increase in sales or some other goal.
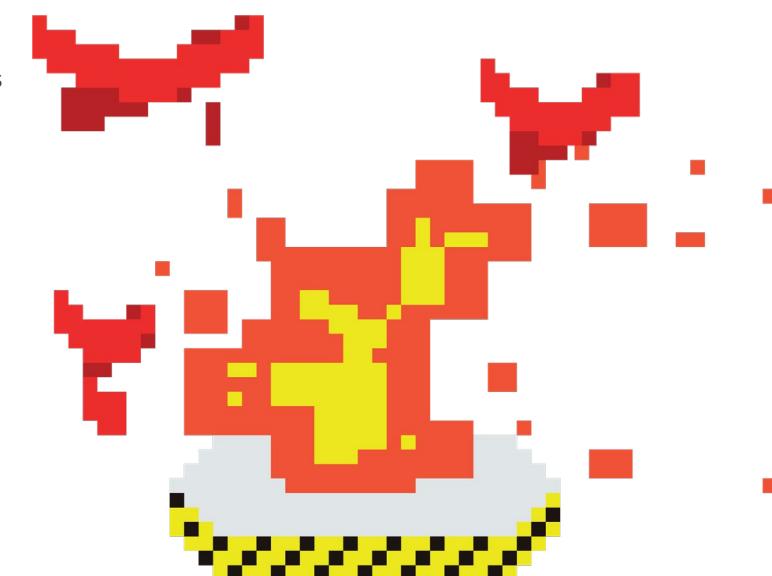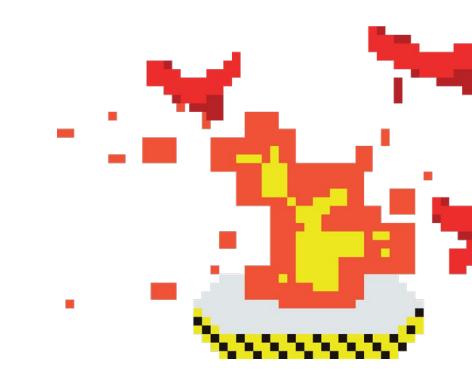
3

THE CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY GUIDE

The ultimate tutorial on **how to create massively profitable content marketing strategies.**
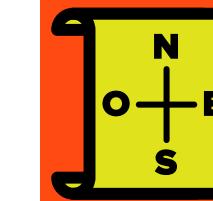
Content marketing is the act of owning (as opposed to renting) media.
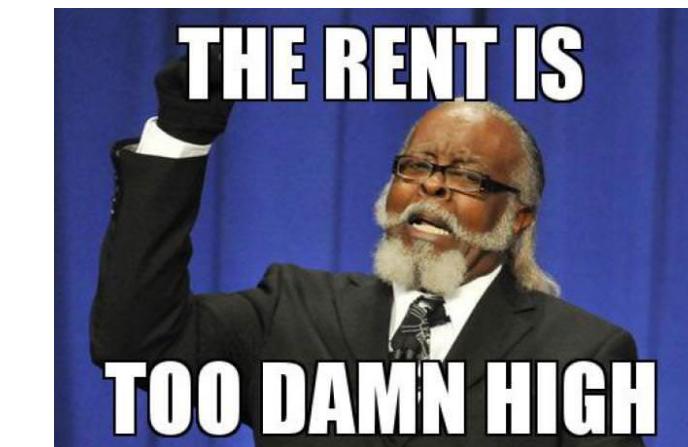
We do content marketing because it can generate a measurable and meaningful impact on your business.

We don't do it because it's trending, or because it's "sexy" or because it's "hot".

We do it because it can generate a measurable and meaningful impact on your business.

There's a common misunderstanding when people hear the words "content marketing".

Creating a content marketing strategy is not the same as launching a blog, getting a ton of followers on social media, or creating a viral meme.

That's simply wrong.

Content marketing is about becoming a publisher who creates content that drives results for the business.

In the old days, companies limited themselves to creating ads that would be placed around content people actually wanted to see.

Think of how TV worked before Netflix.

You'd sit to watch your favorite show and endure the ads in between.

In that model, companies rented media (the TV show) to display their content.

Now think of how a company like GoPro uses their Instagram account:
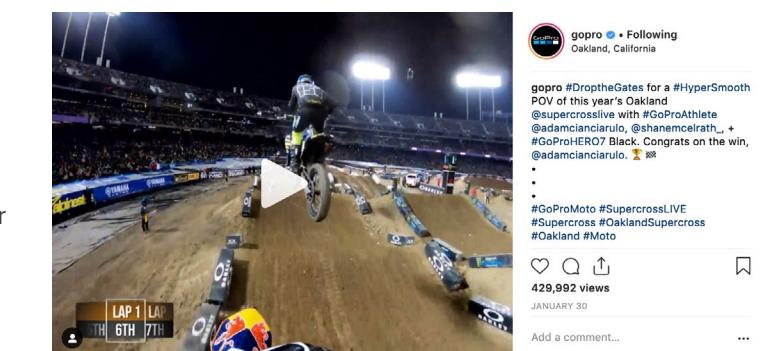
GoPro is not renting anyone's content to get their target audience's attention. GoPro owns content people want to see.

That's the essence of content marketing.
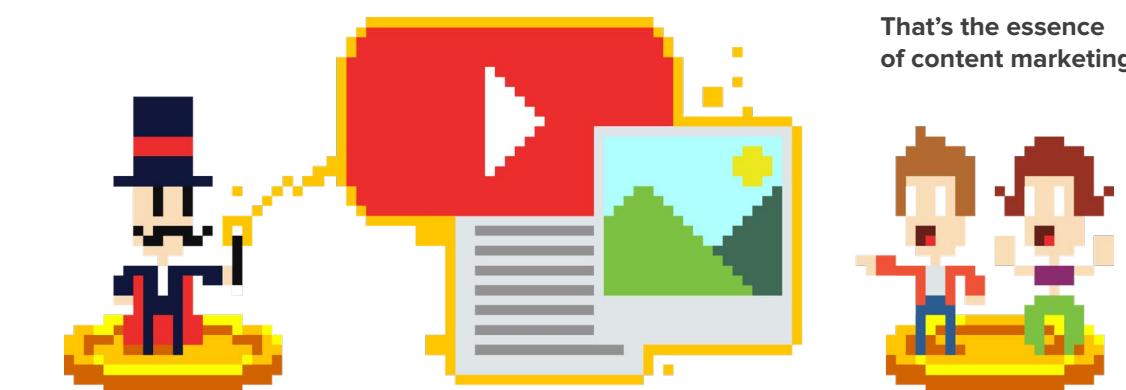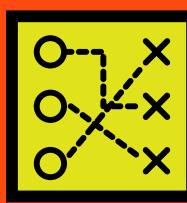
STRATEGY: HOW TO CREATE MASSIVELY PROFITABLE CONTENT MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

A lot of people approach content marketing almost as an afterthought.

They'll say:

"Yeah, I'll create a blog. And I promise to write something new every week/month".

This is the wrong way to do content marketing.

There is a lot of strategic work that needs to happen before you even decide whether to start a blog... not to mention before you start creating any content.

And you need to do all that work in order to do one simple thing:

Send the right message, to the right person, at the right time, and through the right channel.

Here's how to do that:

1. Gain a deep understanding of who your target customers are (including their desires, wants, and needs)—this is called creating target personas

2. Craft simple messages for each of your target personas at each stage of the funnel—this is called creating single-minded value propositions (SMVP)

3. Choose the right format to deliver each message (it's not just about blog posts)—this is called choosing your content types

4. Create content that people want to consume AND that helps you achieve your business goals—this is called creating attention-grabbing content

5. Make sure your target persona actually sees and consumes the content you create—this is the optimization, distribution, and promotion step

Next, I'll explain how each of these work.

Target Personas: Understanding Who Your Ideal Customer Is

A target persona is a representation of your ideal customer.

It's a combination of demographics (age, gender, language, location, etc.) and psychographics (interests, desires, opinions, values, etc.)

For example, a target persona might look like this:

- Johnny & Liz
- 26 years old
- About to get married
- Honeymoon planning
- Just started looking
- Care about clean eating and sustainability

Creating a target persona will help you better understand who you're marketing to—beyond just numbers like visitors, users, or sales.

Imagine if you had to write ad content for a camping equipment company based on one of these descriptions:

- Description #1: Men between 20 and 45 years old, living in the US who like camping.

- Description #2: John Jones, a 40 year old business owner, father of a 10 year old, who enjoys traveling around the US in his RV going from one rock climbing spot to the next. He is deeply concerned about global warming and tries to reduce his carbon footprint as much as possible—some of the things he has done include going vegan, installing solar panels on his RV, and only buying recycled-fiber clothing.

It's pretty clear which of these will make your work easier, right?

And it's not just about creating content—ad targeting, partnerships, channel selection, budgeting, pricing...and many other decisions will become easier once you have a target persona.

1. ## Find demographic data about your target customer.

This is the typical age/gender/income/education/region data you can get almost anywhere.

If you already have some traffic, you can use Google Analytics' Audience data to get started:
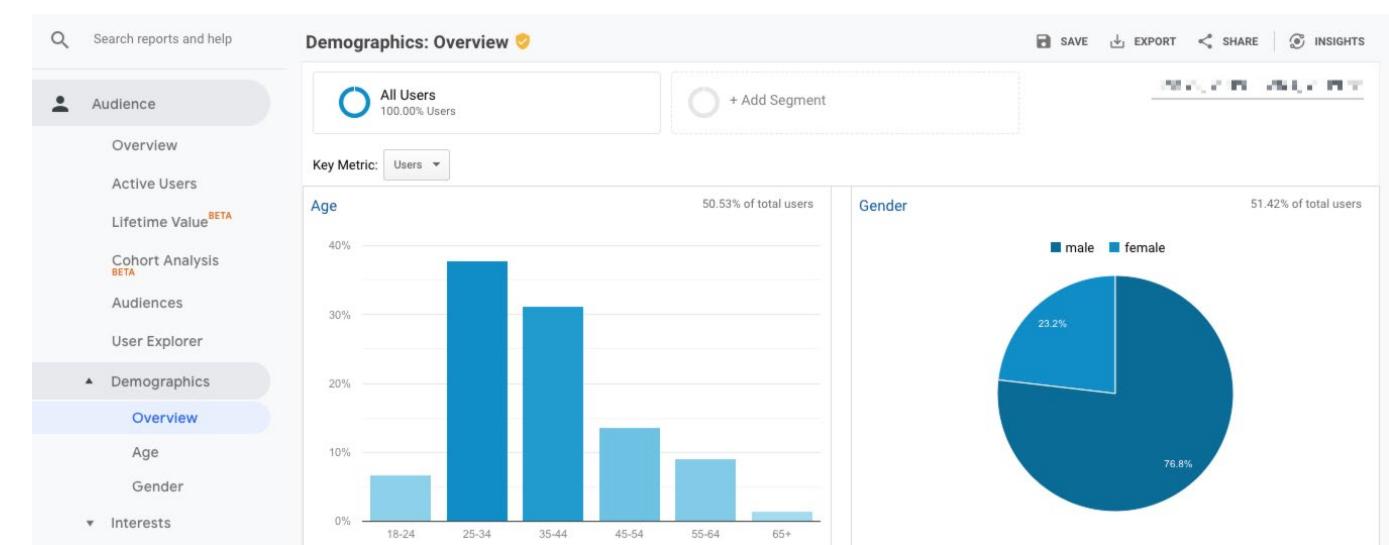
If you don't have traffic yet (and even if you do), Facebook's Audience Insights tool is another great source of demographic data—all you need to do is input some of your target audience's interests:
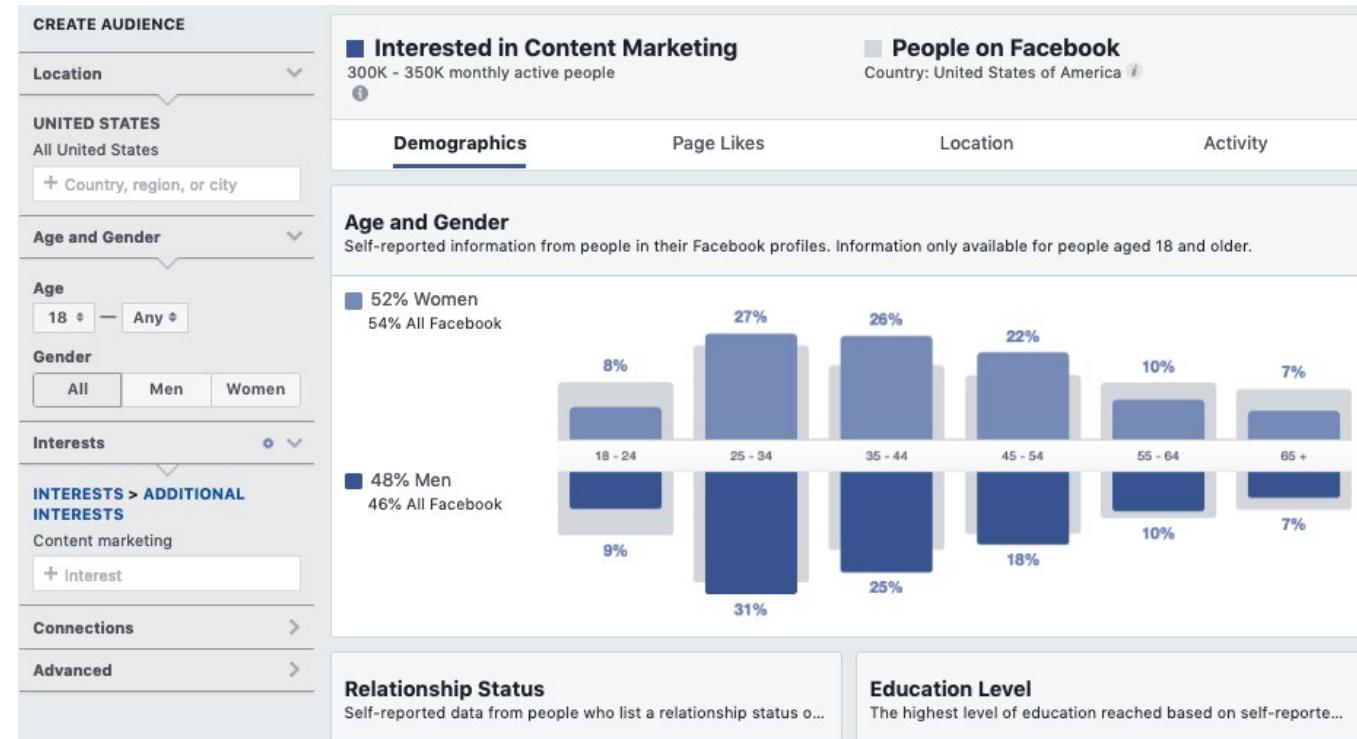
Once you've gathered basic demographic data, it's time to move on to more interesting stuff.

2. Find psychographic data about your target customer.

A lot of marketers skip psychographic research because it's hard (I used to be guilty of this myself.)

Don't skip it!

Psychographic data IS harder to get than demographic data, but it's also way more interesting and actionable.

It includes things like interests, opinions, desires, goals, and values.

This is the stuff that truly sets one group of people apart from the rest of the population.

Your content strategy will be 10x more powerful if you do this.

In our experience, the best way to gather psychographic data is to talk directly with your ideal customer.

If you already have customers, reach out to them and schedule a phone interview.

If you don't have customers yet, the next best thing is to find people who you think will match your future customers and talk to them instead.

Before the interview, prepare an interview script that goes over their pain points, their goals, why they were looking for a product/service like yours, how your product/service is helping them achieve their goals.

During the interview, remember:

Make the interview about them, not about your product

Don't try to sell anything to them, just try to learn as much as you can

Let them do most of the talking while you take notes

As a rule of thumb, you should stop interviewing once you can tell what an interviewee will say before they give you a complete answer—this will happen sooner than you think.

3. Build your target personas.

Once you've gathered demographic and psychographic data about your customers, it's time to build your target personas.

When you analyze the data, you'll naturally notice trends and similarities between certain groups of people in your sample.

These common factors will help you define your target personas.

For example, when we did customer persona research at ClickMinded, we noticed three major groups of people, which we classified as:

- **Agency owners:** People who offer digital marketing as a service to their clients and use ClickMinded as a training tool for staff
- **Entrepreneurs:** People who want to learn digital marketing to grow their own business
- **In-house marketers:** People who belong to a company's in-house marketing team and want to improve their skills

These ended up becoming our target personas (along with more detailed descriptions, of course.)

Protip: Don't create more than 3 target personas if this is your first time doing it!

Once you've figured out who your target personas are going to be, use one of the many templates available online, like this one from Hubspot, to organize all the information.
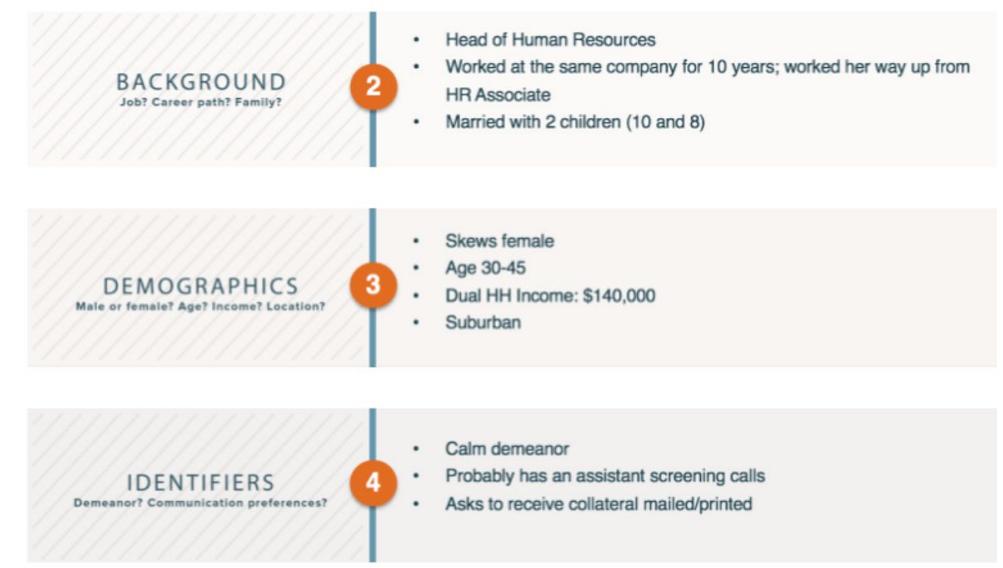
4. Share with your team and keep tweaking based on new learnings.

The last step of this process is to share these personas with the rest of the marketing team.

This information can help inform much more than your content—your teammates will thank you for this and you will be able to get everyone on the same page with regards to your messaging strategy.

Plus, sharing your learnings will get you feedback from other teams that can help tweak and improve the personas you've built.

To get started with persona creation, check out these resources:

- The ClickMinded Persona Creation Mini-Course
- The Complete, Actionable Guide to Marketing Personas
- How to Create Detailed Buyer Personas for Your Business

Single-Minded Value Propositions: Crafting Simple, Conversion-Focused Messages

One of the keys to creating a content strategy that converts is to break down your product's message into small, digestible pieces that take the user through each step of the funnel.

We call these single-minded value propositions (SMVPs.)

Not to be confused with a product's overall value proposition—which is the overarching message of why your product/offer is attractive to your target customer.

A single-minded value proposition is simply a message sent each target persona at each stage in the funnel, that leads them to take an action and move to the next stage of the funnel.

(For a refresher on sales funnels, read the **"Sales Funnels Strategy" chapter** of this guide.)

Let's use the ridesharing company Lyft as an example.

Lyft is a two-sided marketplace, so they likely have specific personas for riders and drivers.

Each of these personas has a different journey down the funnel:

- **Rider:** From not knowing about Lyft, to using it regularly to move around the city
- **Driver:** From not knowing about Lyft, to driving Lyft users for part- or full-time income

So Lyft's SMVPs probably look something like this:
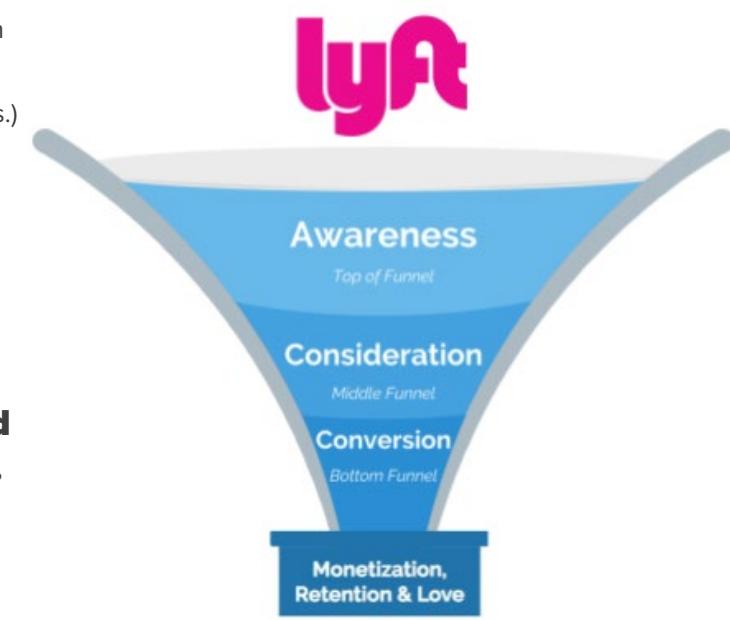
RIDER	DRIVER
You need a better way to move around	You need extra income/flexibility
Ridesharing is easy/cheap	You can use your car to get extra income
Get your first Lyft ride	Apply to Lyft and do your first trip
Invite your friends to Lyft and earn trips	Continue driving and earn rewards

As you can see in the example above, SMVPs are:

- Simple and easy to understand
- Specific to each persona
- Specific to the persona's needs at each stage of the funnel
- Leading the persona to the next stage of the funnel

With a map of SMVPs, Lyft can easily define messages for each of their digital marketing efforts.

Is their objective to attract more potential users in NYC who aren't using ridesharing yet (a.k.a. the top-of-their-funnel)?

Lyft's message could be about how difficult it is to find parking in NYC or how annoying it is when certain subway lines or stops are closed.

Spoiler: That's exactly what Lyft did.

Does Lyft want to send an email campaign reminding new users that they can use Lyft during the holidays (a.k.a. their bottom-of-the-funnel)?

Lyft's message will simply be to book a ride.

See how much easier it is once you've figured out your SVMPs?

If you're getting started, follow these steps:

1. Write down each of your company's target personas
2. Draw the sales funnel next to each target persona (like we showed in the Lyft example above)
3. Break down each persona's journey down the funnel into discrete steps (i.e. what do they need, think, want, at each step?)
4. Write a one sentence message for each stage of the funnel that easily communicates the value of your product in the context of what THEY want/need/think
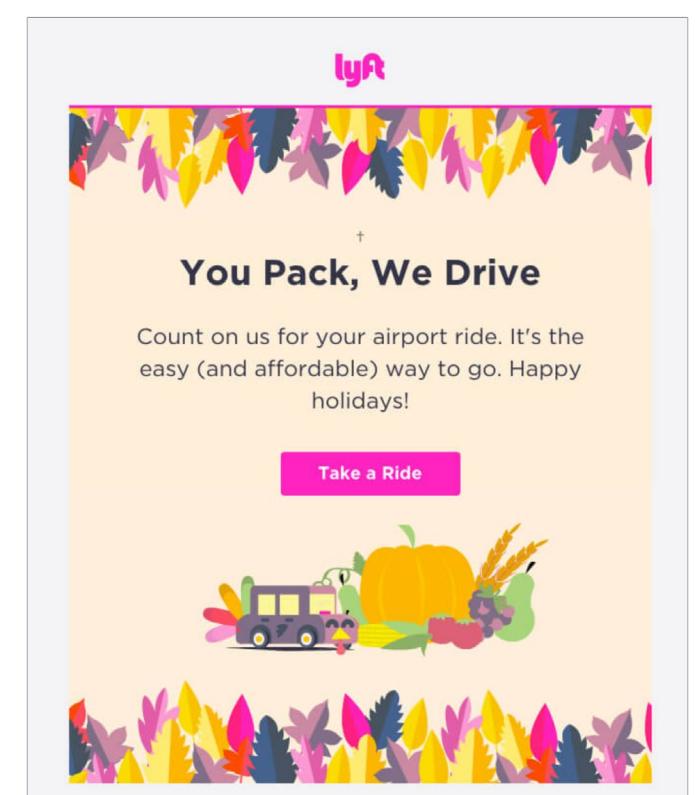
Content Types: Choosing the Best Vehicle for Your Message

So far, you've identified your target personas and created single-minded value propositions for each persona's journey through the funnel.

The next step is to figure out how you will deliver these messages.

If you think content marketing = blog posts, you're not thinking big enough.

Different content types work better for different stages of the funnel...

... and there's a lot to choose from.

At the top-of-the-funnel, you're looking to attract large audiences to your content.

Some examples of content types that work for this stage of the funnel include:

- Podcasts
- Ads
- Blog posts
- Social media posts
- YouTube videos

At the middle-of-the-funnel, your objectives are to convert visitors into leads and to nurture them.

Some examples of content types that work for the middle-of-the-funnel include:

- Lead magnets or downloadables
- Blog posts
- Emails
- Webinars
- Free trials
- Mini-courses
- Demos
- Ads (remarketing)
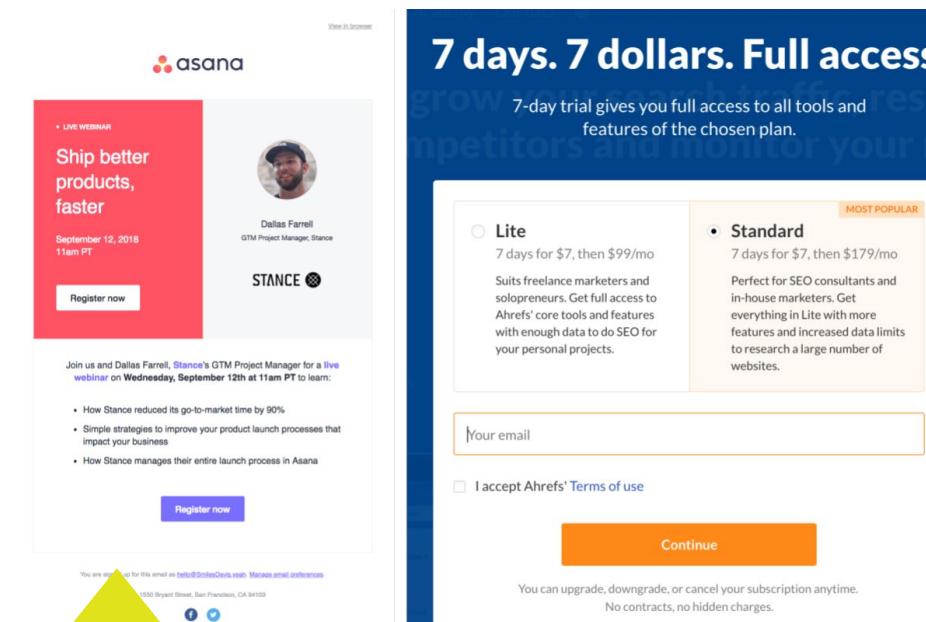
At the bottom-of-the-funnel, your objective is to convert leads into customers.

These are some examples of content types that work for the bottom-of-the-funnel:

- Sales pages
- Testimonials pages
- Checkout pages
- Emails
- Ads (remarketing)
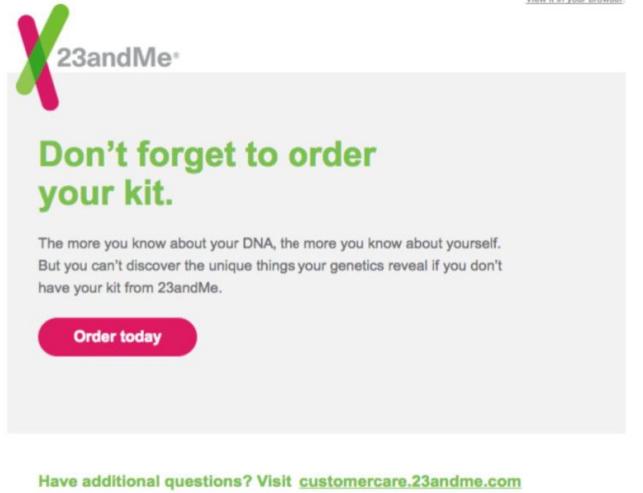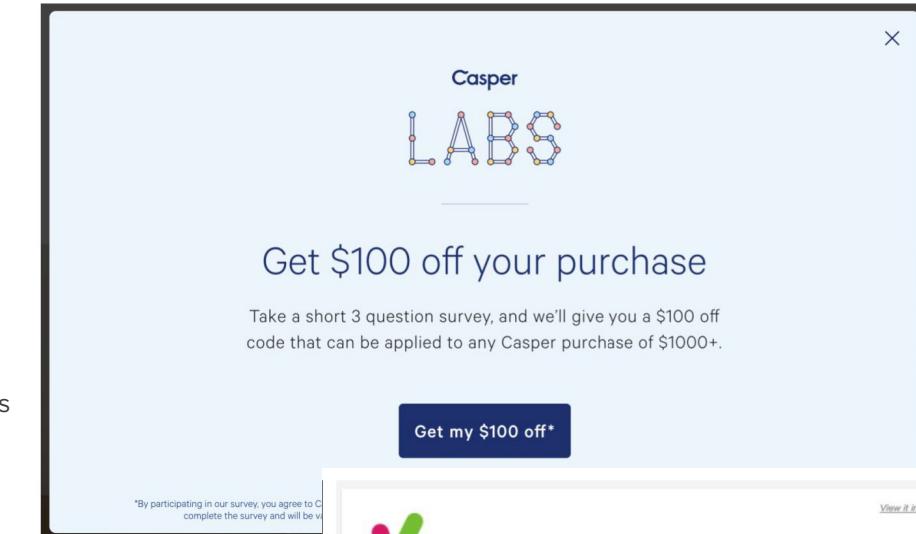
At the retention, monetization, and love stage of the funnel, your objectives are to increase the customer's lifetime value and to get referrals.

Some content types that work for this include:

- Emails
- Feedback forms
- Customer interviews
- Leaderboards
- Usage or progress tracking reports
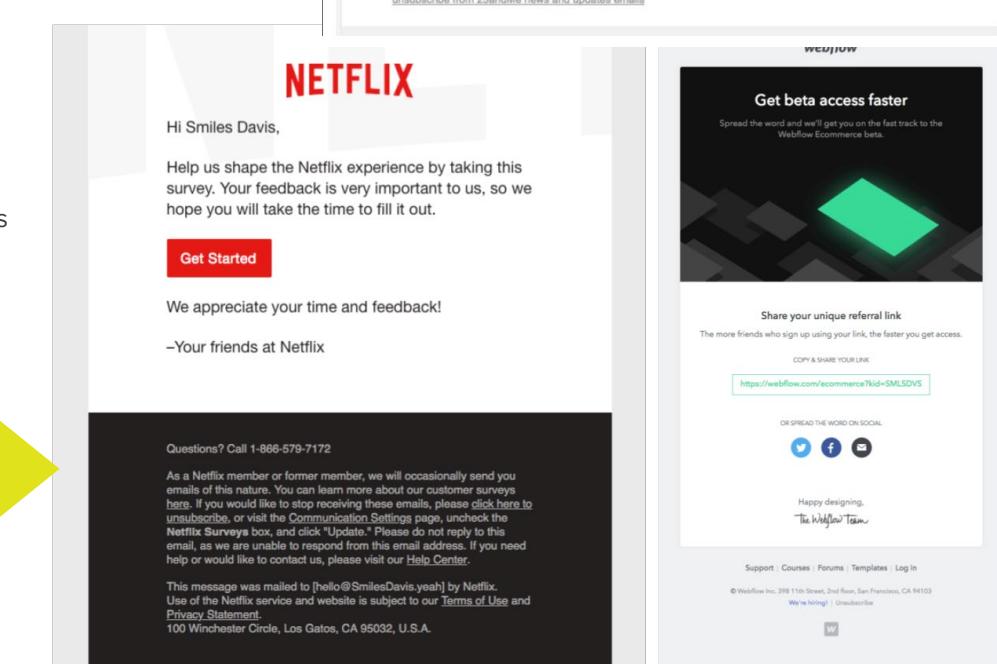
Attention-Grabbing Content: Creating Stuff People Actually Want

One of the biggest mistakes a content marketer can make is to forget how people consume online content.

When was the last time you read an entire news article? Watched 100% of a YouTube video? Looked at all the photos on your Instagram feed?

Do you usually focus on a single thing at a time? Or do you have several tabs open on your browser? Do you quickly switch between several apps on your phone? Do you use your phone while watching Netflix?

You get the picture.

Online audiences are typically multitaskers who are constantly being bombarded with information.

These are the people you need to create content for.

The only person who'll probably give your content her undivided attention is your mom…and even your mom is a "maybe".

Remember: Your goal is to create content people want to consume.

In general, **we use four fundamentals for the content we create:**

1. Can your audience take this information and put it into action right away?

One company who does this really well is Scott's Cheap Flights, a company that sends a daily newsletter with cheap flight deals.

First, they only send me deals for flights departing from the region or even the airport I'm near—because I can't really act on a deal that departs from the other side of the globe.

And second, their emails even include instructions on how to book the tickets.

That's as actionable as it can get.

2. Is it interesting?

Is your audience getting something that's new and different from the millions of pieces of content already out there?

This is a content marketing strategy guide. If you Google "content marketing strategy," this is what you'll get.

We're competing against more than 2 billion results for this topic.

No matter what your industry is, it's very possible that every piece of content you create is facing that level of competition.

How do you set yourself apart?

For starters, you could have something interesting to say or a unique take on the topic.

A great example of this is Tim Ferriss—most of his content is focused on some sort of unconventional or counter-intuitive solution to a problem.

When most people talked about exercise for weight loss, he wrote this blog post:

Protip: Trying to be too interesting just for the sake of it can backfire. If you find yourself creating clickbait-y content, stop. Just stop. The internet doesn't need more clickbait. If you make a promise of something interesting, you need to deliver.

3. Is it entertaining?

Is the content something your audience will enjoy while they consume it? Will they want to share it with other people?

This is an element we like to include in all of our content.

When you write a blog post about "how to make the perfect cappuccino", you'd naturally think you are competing against other "cappuccino making tutorial" content.

In reality, you're competing against things like social media notifications, texts from friends or family, whatever is on the TV, or the music or podcast playing on the background.

It's not just your competitors, everyone wants a piece of your audience's attention.

That's why your content can benefit from being entertaining.

A great example of a company creating entertaining content that also helps generate business results is Airbnb:

Airbnb publishes beautiful photography, sometimes sourced and curated from actual Airbnb users, that inspires its audience to travel the world.

This is content their audience enjoys consuming AND will invite them to stay at places listed on their platform.

4. **Is it easy to consume?**

Is the content presented in a way that makes it easy to read, view, or listen to?

This is one element most content marketers forget about.

You could hit every single point we just covered: Create the most actionable, interesting, and entertaining piece of content in the history of the world...

...but if it looks like this:

You likely won't get many eyes on it.

Online audiences appreciate convenience—so you should make your content easy to consume.

A great example of making content easy to consume is Buzzfeed's "Tasty":

Instead of doing written recipes, Tasty became a success by compressing those long recipes into short videos that are easy to follow.

That's probably why more people have seen a Tasty recipe video than have ever read a recipe book.

When you create content, it will be hard to hit all of these four fundamental elements (actionable, interesting, entertaining, and easy to consume) for every single piece, but you should try to get as many of them as possible at all times.

Optimization, Distribution, and Promotion: Getting Your Content In Front of Your Audience

Let's do a quick recap.

If you've gotten this far along in the process, you:

1. Have a deep understanding of who your ideal customers are—a.k.a. your target personas

2. Came up with simple messages to send each of your target personas at each stage of the funnel—a.k.a. your single-minded value propositions

3. Picked the right format to deliver your messages depending on the stage of the funnel—a.k.a. your content types

4. Created content that people will actually want to consume—a.k.a. attention-grabbing content

This last step can make or break everything if you don't do it right.

5. Getting your content in front of your audience—a.k.a. optimization, distribution, and promotion

You can see where I'm going with this.

If you can't manage to get people to consume your content, your content is not going to help you hit your goals.

Over the years, I've met tons of world-class content creators who just don't invest enough effort into getting it in front of the right people.

To do this, you have to do two things very well:

- Pick one or more distribution channels
- Optimize for those distribution channels until you get your content in front of your audience

For example, if you decide to direct traffic from search engines to your blog, you will need to do some good ol' search engine optimization on your blog posts.

If you are sending an email campaign, you will need to follow best practices for segmentation, personalization, subject lines, sending times, and many other variables.

This step will require you to get a working knowledge of how each distribution channel works, which is why content marketers are typically generalist digital marketers.

To get started with distribution channels, check out the other chapters of this guide:

- **Chapter 4: The SEO Strategy Guide**
- **Chapter 5: The Email Marketing Strategy Guide**
- **Chapter 6: The Digital Advertising Strategy Guide**
- **Chapter 7: The Social Media Strategy Guide**

STATS: CONTENT MARKETING METRICS

In content marketing, there are no specific metrics that work for every strategy.

However, most metrics you *should* track can be classified as:

- Content metrics
- Business metrics

Content metrics will depend on the content type and distribution channel you pick for your content.

Here are some examples:

- For an email newsletter, these could be the open and click rates
- For a social media post, these could be the number of likes, comments, or shares

Content metrics are a good proxy for how effective a piece of content is at engaging the target audience.

Business metrics, on the other hand, depend on which stage of the funnel the piece of content belongs to.

For example:

- For a top-of-the-funnel blog post, these could be new visitors or organic traffic
- For a bottom-of-the-funnel sales page, these could be sales or conversion rate

These metrics will let you know if the piece of content is actually achieving its objective of moving the needle for the business.
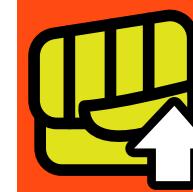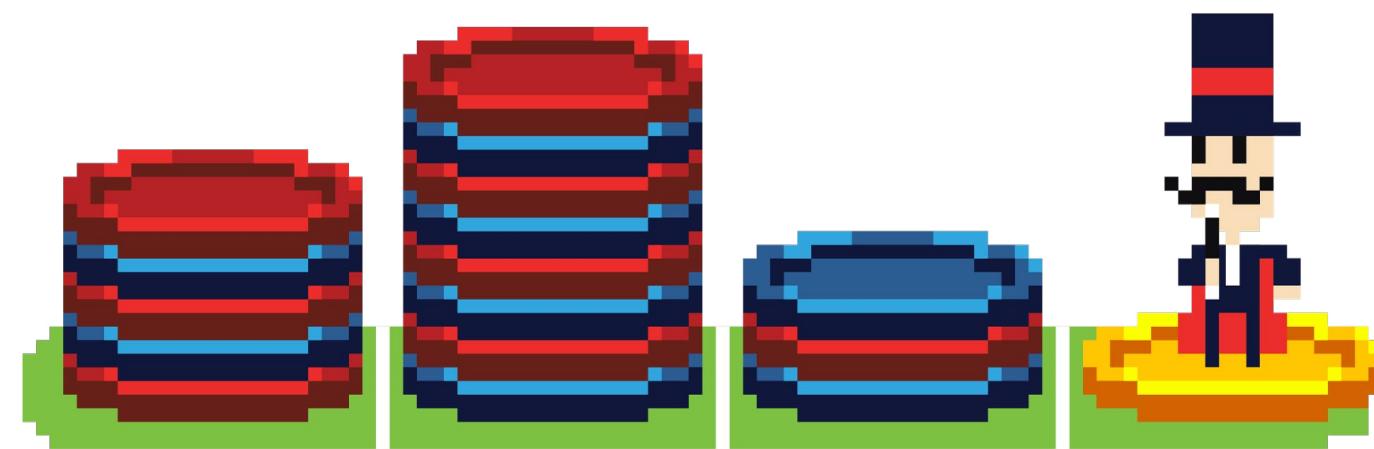
POWER-UPS: THE BEST CONTENT MARKETING TOOLS

Now that you have a game plan to help you become a content marketing pro, it's time to grab the tools you'll need to start implementing your plan.

Content marketers have to learn many different skills in order to be effective—the tools you'll use will vary depending on the channel and content type you create.

Here are basic tools that will help you along the way.
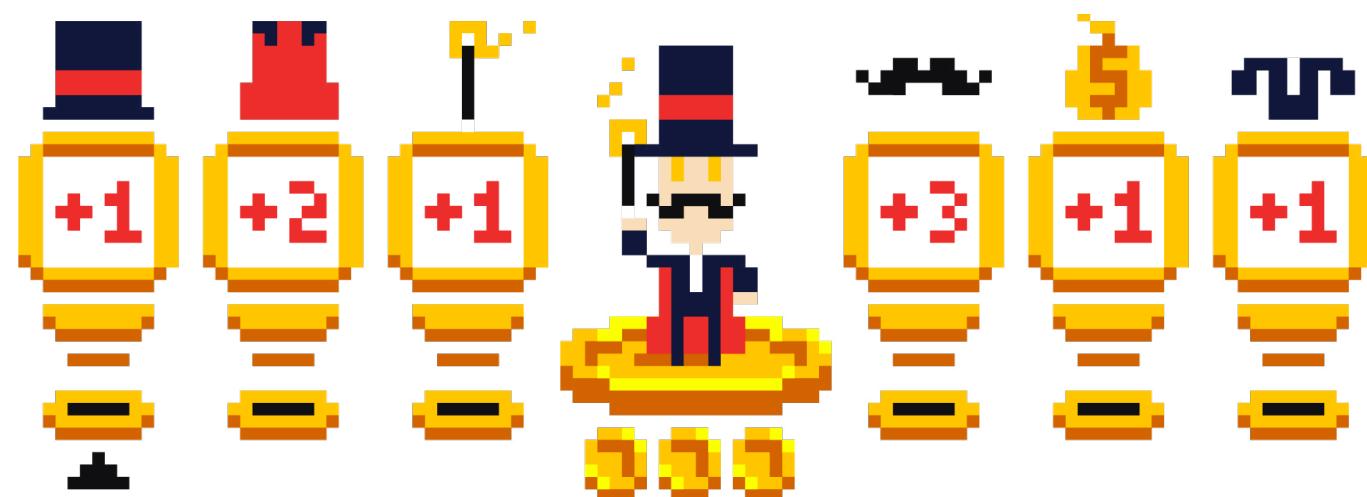
Content Creation & Copywriting Tools

These will help you create simple, beautiful, and impactful content:

- **Grammarly:** An AI-powered writing assistant to help you write clearly and without mistakes. Grammarly offers a simple Chrome extension that works with most writing tools.
  Check out Grammarly

- **Hemingway Editor:** An app that helps you compose writing that's bold and easy to understand. Hemingway analyzes the composition of your sentences, tells you which ones are hard to read, and suggests how to improve them.
  Check out Hemingway Editor

- **CoSchedule's Headline Analyzer:** A simple tool that analyzes the strength of your headlines based on data about what generates clicks, engagement, and shares. You'll get a simple score so you can compare different variations of a headline.
  Check out CoSchedule's Headline Analyzer

- **Sumo's Headline Generator:** A source of inspiration for headlines that inspire readers to click and want to learn more.
  Check out Sumo's Headline Generator

- **Canva:** If you're not a designer, Canva can help you quickly put together beautiful design assets like logos, social posts, ebooks, or ads. Their library of templates makes it easy to avoid messing up if you, like me, lack an eye for design.
  Check out Canva

Content Ideation Tools

Coming up with the right content to create is just as important as actually creating it. These tools will help with that.

- **BuzzSumo:** Creating content people like is much easier once you know what the most popular content already out there is. BuzzSumo makes it easy to find out which content has been shared massively online and which influencers have helped to achieve that.
Check out BuzzSumo

- **ahrefs:** even though this is technically more of an SEO tool, we love to use ahrefs to make data-driven decisions about our content and to "spy" on our competitors to find out which content is working well for them.
Check out ahrefs

Project Management Tools

Implementing a content marketing strategy involves juggling several things at the same time—whether that's managing a content calendar or keeping track of a team of writers. You can use either Trello (the one we used to use) or Asana (the one we currently use) to solve this problem.

- **Trello:** This is a simple project management tool that is great for team collaboration. Its highly visual interface makes it easy to visualize the progress of any project.
Check out Trello

- **Asana:** A slightly more advanced tool than Trello, Asana offers a ton of features for advanced project management. We use it not just for content marketing, but to manage all of our company campaigns and operations.
Check out Asana

HELPERS: GREAT CONTENT MARKETING PEOPLE AND BLOGS TO FOLLOW

There is A LOT of content about content marketing out there.

Ironically (but unsurprisingly), most of that content is pretty bad.

These are some of our favorite people and companies who are creating content that will actually help you become a better content marketer.

Joanna Wiebe: Joanna is the founder of Copy Hackers, a copywriting blog for marketers. She has created some of our favorite guides and tutorials on conversion-focused content.
Follow Joanna on Twitter

Nat Eliason: Nat specializes in SEO-focused content marketing and consistently writes helpful guides about how his company, Growth Machine, creates content that drives massive amounts of organic traffic.
Check out Growth Machine's blog

Benji Hyam: Benji is the founder of Grow & Convert, a content marketing agency. His posts range from the very strategic aspects of content marketing to very specific implementation case studies.
Follow Benji on Twitter

BuzzSumo Blog: We've mentioned BuzzSumo in the tools section of this guide already. The BuzzSumo often leverages the intelligence from their own tools to share data-driven tips and strategies to improve your content.
Check out the BuzzSumo blog

Sumo Blog: This recommendation is a little bit meta. Even though it's not strictly a content marketing blog, Sumo has some of the best content marketers in the world. We like to follow what they do and publish to get ideas for our own content strategies.
Check out the Sumo blog

The best thing a content marketer can do for their career is to build a portfolio of successful content.

When you're a beginner, you have three options to get hands-on experience:

- **Create a content marketing strategy for your own business.** If you already have a business, you can simply use what you've learned to grow it.

- **Start your own blog/YouTube channel/TikTok account**, and try to grow it as much and as quickly as possible. This is the option we recommend for most content marketers, since you typically learn a lot faster when you start something from scratch.

- Another great alternative is to **find a business who you can help with content marketing** and that will give you access to publish and make changes to their content. On the flip side, you will have less freedom to experiment and your content will typically be owned by the company.

Once you have this figured out, use the following framework to get started:

1. Finish reading **this guide**, of course.

    Outcome: You will have a solid foundation of content marketing principles to guide you—plus, the final section of this guide will help avoid some common pitfalls for beginner content marketers.

2. Pick a **target persona** and **goal** for your content. At this point it's not strictly necessary to create a messaging strategy that covers the entire funnel or several personas. If you're starting a brand new blog or social presence, for example, it's simpler to focus on the top-of-the-funnel and try to hit a traffic/followers/views goal.

    Outcome: You will know exactly who you're creating content for - and why, which will make the process of creating it a lot easier.

3. **Create and publish content** following the core principles we explained in the strategy section of this guide: Actionable, interesting, entertaining, and easy-to-consume.

    Outcome: You will create content people will actually want to consume, which will make distributing it a lot easier.

4. Come up with a plan to **distribute and promote** your content. Don't be afraid to try many things and don't be discouraged when most of them don't work—persistence is key in this step.

    Outcome: You will develop a thick skin for failure and rejection and the discipline to push through until you get the results you want. This is what differentiates great content marketers from the rest.

5. **Track important metrics,** figure out what worked, what didn't, and how to improve moving forward.

    Outcome: You will get better with every new piece of content you publish, and you will be more likely to create successful content in the future.

There are a few mistakes we consistently see new content marketers make.

These can set you back or slow down your progression towards becoming a content marketing pro.

We made a quick guide so you can avoid these like a boss.

Vanity Metrics

Vanity metrics are those that make you feel good about yourself but don't really mean anything in terms of generating growth for the company.

Content marketing is one of the areas of digital marketing where vanity metrics are most common.

Some common vanity metrics include shares, likes, followers, views/traffic (without context), or how much anyone who isn't the target persona likes the content (this includes your CEO or your manager).

When in doubt, ask yourself: *Does this mean this content is helping the business? Or is it just noise?*

Trying to Automate Too Much

Content marketing is a lot of work. There is no way around it.

There are tools that will make different tasks easier, but trying to automate too much of your content marketing will usually end badly.

Some people try to over-automate social media publishing by just sending the exact same message through every channel...while rarely getting any engagement.

Others try to automate the creation of hundreds of web pages with content that's programmatically generated... this is called thin content and sites that did this were hit by Google's Panda algorithm update.

In our experience, to succeed at content marketing, you have to really invest time, effort, and resources into it—if you're not willing to do this, you're better off not doing content marketing at all.

Spray and Pray

This is probably the most common mistake beginners make.

Spray and pray happens when you:

Invest a lot of time and effort into creating a lot of content but not nearly enough time promoting it

Publish a lot of content but don't track important metrics to know what worked, what didn't, and how to improve moving forward

Many content marketers stick exclusively to planning and creating content—which are the most fun aspects for most people.

The top content marketers in the game follow through and do the not-so-sexy work of making sure the content reaches its audience, as well as tracking and analyzing the performance of their content.

Wrong Persona

When you're creating content, it's easy to lean towards creating content you like.

That's fine if you're running your personal blog, YouTube channel, or social media account...

...but usually not that helpful when you're creating content for a business.

Keep in mind that a business' target persona is likely not the same as you—you need to create content for them.

The ultimate tutorial on **how to drive massive traffic from search engines to ANY website** (even if you're new to SEO)
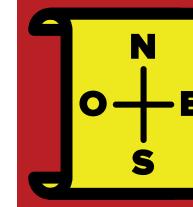
WORLD MAP: WHAT IS SEO?

Search engine optimization (SEO) is, very simply, all the stuff we do to drive traffic from search engines to our digital assets.

In most cases, this just means your website, but it could also be a social media account, a product listing on an eCommerce site, or a mobile app.

There are going to be people out there trying to convince you that it's this incredibly difficult process that takes decades of experience and unknowable amounts of talent and innate skill.

It's not true.

There's also lots of hype out there about whether or not SEO is dead. No matter how many articles you read online, if there's one important takeaway you should keep from this guide, it's this:

SEO is (still) an extremely powerful tool for increasing website traffic.

Just think about it.

As complicated as the internet has become, there are really just a few ways in which people get to websites nowadays:

- By typing the website URL directly in a browser. This is what's called "direct traffic"—although I bet if you try to think about the websites you visit this way, you'll probably come up with fewer than 20 (and Google will be one of those!)

- By following a link from a friend or one that you found on another website. This is what's called "referral traffic" and it's what happens when your friend emails you a dumb link to a "[random/ stupid/ridiculous article]" (made you click!)

- By clicking on articles people post on social media.

- **By going to Google and searching for something.**

Of all of these, **search is the largest referrer of external traffic**, driving almost 35% of all online visits (vs. 26% from social media.)

That means that if you can get your content ranking on search engines, you'll have a steady source of free, targeted traffic to your site.

We designed this guide to teach you how to do that.
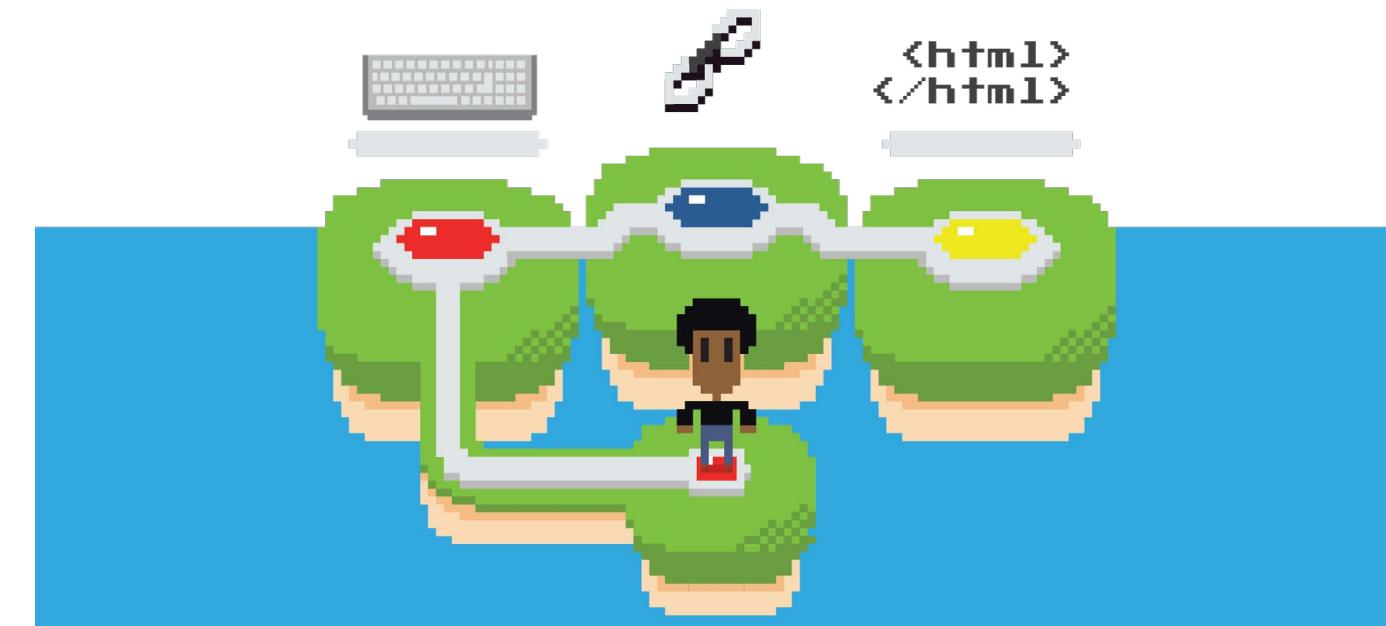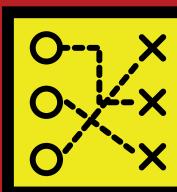
STRATEGY: HOW TO GET MASSIVE TRAFFIC FROM SEARCH ENGINES

Many people will try to convince you that SEO is hard and highly technical.

Don't believe them.

The most powerful thing you can do to learn SEO and increase your traffic from search engines is to understand how search engines, like Google, make money.

The TL;DR of a search engine's business model is:

1. Search engines compete to provide the most relevant results to user queries

2. People use the search engine that gives them the best answers to their questions (a.k.a. Google)

3. Search engines monetize their users by selling ads on the search results page (more users = more ad revenue)

It's as simple as that.

If you want to succeed at SEO, your best strategy is to help Google make more money…

…and you can do that by helping them answer their users' questions.

Here's how to do that:

1. Understand what users are searching for (and create content that answers their questions)— this is called **keyword research**

2. Help search engines understand what your content is about—this is what's called **on-page optimization**

3. Demonstrate to search engines that you have the authority to answer the users' questions— this is called **off-page optimization**

4. Make sure search engines can easily find your content—this is called **technical optimization**

Next, I'll explain how each of these work.
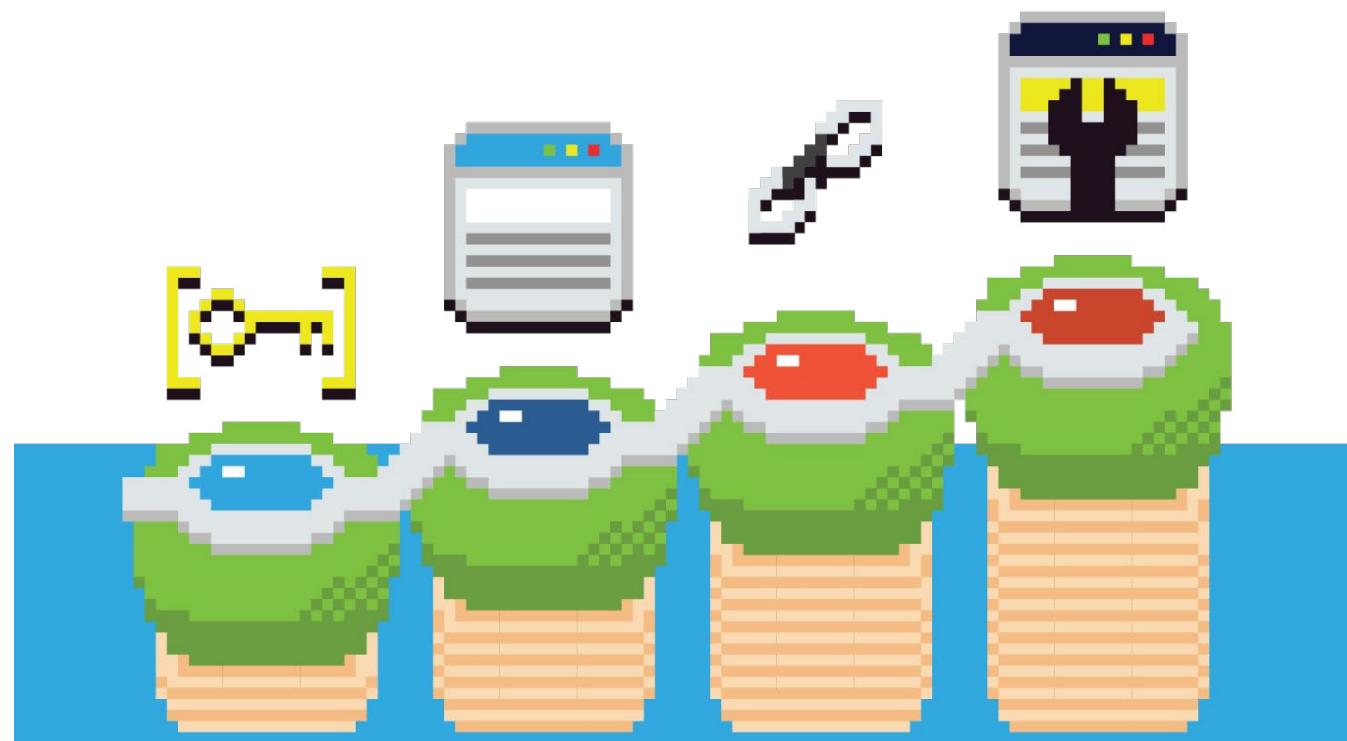
Keyword Research: Understand What Users are Searching For (and Create Content That Answers Their Questions)

Keyword research is the act of searching, organizing, and analyzing user queries (searches) to create an SEO content strategy.

In fact, **the analysis of keywords is the reason why SEO even exists.**

By performing keyword research, you can easily:

- Assess market demand for your product or service

- Gain a deeper understanding of your target market

- Discover "hidden" opportunities that you might have missed otherwise

One of the great things about SEO is that access to keyword data is more or less available to everyone…

…which means you can compete - even against massive companies.

To run keyword research like a professional, all you really need to understand is:

1. How popular each keyword is—to know how many people are searching for it

2. What the person typing the keyword is looking for—to understand what content you need to create

3. How much competition there is for each keyword—to discover how hard it will be to rank for it

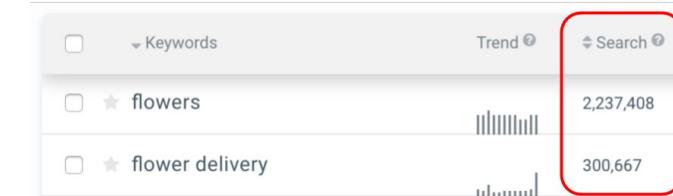Most people go as far as step 1 and go on to create weak SEO strategies.

Don't be like most people.

First, to determine how popular a keyword is, look for its **search volume** using a third-party tool (more on this in the "Tools" section of this chapter.)

Search volume is a metric of how often a particular keyword is typed by users in a search engine: **The higher the search volume, the more demand there is for a certain keyword.**

Often times, you'll find that the search volume for keywords varies (sometimes a lot) depending on the tool you use to do research. For example:

Tool #1

	Keywords	Trend	⇳ Search
☐ ★	flowers		2,237,408
☐ ★	flower delivery		300,667

Tool #2

	Keyword	KD	Volume ▼
☐ +	flowers	81	769K
☐ +	flower delivery	44	195K

That's why you should think of search volumes as relative metrics instead of absolute.

From the data above, you could conclude that *"flowers"* is 4 to 7 times more popular than *"flower delivery"* so, at first glance, it's the first keyword looks like a more attractive target.

Next, you should try to understand what the users typing that keyword are searching for—this is what's called **"searcher intent."**

One of the most important things you can do is to grab the keywords you're researching and plug them into Google yourself.

Sometimes, you'll realize you were wrong about what people were searching for.

For example, you could think that people searching for "how to write good" on Google are looking for copywriting tips—maybe a great keyword for a company offering content marketing services, right?

Wrong.

Google | how to write good

Amazon.com: Ryan Higa's How to Write Good (9780316464079 ...
https://www.amazon.com/Ryan-Higas-How-Write-Good/dp/0316464074 ▾
Ryan Higa is a YouTube celebrity, actor, comedian, and producer. He got started on YouTube while uploading videos as a teenager growing up in Hawaii back ...

Ryan Higa's How to Write Good: 9781510201408: Amazon.com: Books
https://www.amazon.com/Ryan-Higas-How-Write-Good/dp/1510201408 ▾
Ryan Higa's **How to Write Good** on Amazon.com. *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers. An unconventional, irreverent, yet heartfelt memoir by Ryan Higa, one of ...

How to Write Good by Ryan Higa - Goodreads
https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/32600912-how-to-write-good ▾
★★★★☆ Rating: 4.2 - 517 votes
How to Write Good has 517 ratings and 87 reviews. Catherine said: My son found this very funny. I admit I haven't read it, but he enjoyed it, so it ...

In reality, most people typing this into Google are looking for an autobiographical book titled "How to Write Good" written by a well-known YouTuber.

That's why it's important to not only know how popular a keyword is but to also really understand what users mean when they type them into the search bar.

Finally, another major thing to consider is keyword competition.

If a keyword seems like a great fit for your website, it's probably a great fit for plenty of others too—and you're likely not the first one to notice.

If you find that all the websites ranking on the first page for the keyword you want to target belong to big brands with authoritative websites, it's usually better to pursue other opportunities.

There are many ways to determine the authority of different websites (more on that in the "Off-Page Optimization" section of this chapter,) but some keyword research tools already include a metric for competition that you can use.

That's really all you need to be in the top 5% of people doing keyword research:

1. Create content for keywords that people are actually looking for

2. Make sure that you understand the searchers' intent for the keywords you're targeting

3. Go after keywords that you can actually compete and rank for

Eager to get started? These are some great resources to help you take your first steps into keyword research:

● The ClickMinded Keyword Strategy Masterclass

● Keyword Research for SEO: The Definitive Guide

● How To Do Keyword Research for SEO

Overview: seo
Keyword difficulty ⁱ

94

We estimate that you'll need backlinks from ~1,197 websites to rank in top 10 for this keyword ⁱ
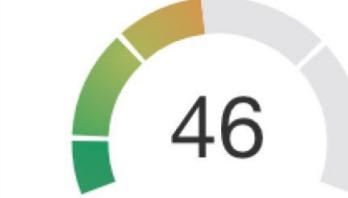
Overview: how to seo
Keyword difficulty ⁱ

70

We estimate that you'll need backlinks from ~202 websites to rank in top 10 for this keyword ⁱ

Overview: off page seo
Keyword difficulty ⁱ

46

We estimate that you'll need backlinks from ~71 websites to rank in top 10 for this keyword ⁱ

On-Page Optimization: Help Search Engines Understand What Your Content is About

On-page optimization is the process of improving the content of your pages so it's easier for search engines to understand what they are about.

As sophisticated as Google's algorithm is, it can't *understand* the content of a webpage as easily as you and I can.

Robots are amazing - but they're not there yet.

For example, when a search engine crawls a webpage with the word "bat", it needs to figure out if the page content is about:

● The British-American Tobacco group

● The winged mammal

● The baseball equipment

While you can probably take a quick look at the page and figure it out, computers need to look for clues that reveal what the content is about.

Mainly, search engines will look for these clues in content in the form of:

● Keywords (and placement of these keywords on the webpage)

● Synonyms

● Contextually relevant keywords

● Image alt text

● The theme of the website that published the webpage

Over time, search engines have gotten smarter and figured out that how their users interact with the content is a great way to understand what content is about.

For example, let's say you Google the phrase "baseball bat" and are presented with three options:

A. An analysis of the British-American Tobacco group

B. Ten reasons why bats are the coolest mammals

C. Where to buy used bats (and other sports equipment)

If you click on option C, you're giving the search engine a signal that this page is about **baseball bats.**

Here are just some of the user signals that search engines probably look at:

● **Click-through rates (CTR):** The percentage of people who click on a specific search result for a specific query

● **Bounce rates:** The percentage of people who visit a site and leave after viewing just one page

● **Time on page:** Pretty self-explanatory

● **Pages per session:** Also self-explanatory

By providing all of these clues to search engines, you're essentially helping them to provide better answers to their users (and make more money)—which they will reward by giving you higher rankings.

Win-win!

The best part? On-page optimization is perhaps the most powerful element of SEO that is **100% within your control.**

Here are some great guides for you to get started with on-page optimization:

● The Complete On-Page SEO Tutorial

● On-Page SEO: Anatomy of a Perfectly Optimized Page

Off-Page Optimization: Demonstrate That You Have the Authority to Answer the Users' Questions

You already know that search engines strive to provide the best possible answers to their users' questions.

However, with over one hundred trillion (that's a 1 followed by 14 zeros) web pages indexed by Google alone, there's bound to be more than ten (the number of pages included in the first page of the search results) good answers for each search query.

So how do Google and other search engines figure out which is the most relevant result for each query?

First, they filter by relevance—that's why we discussed on-page optimization in the previous section.

But even after that, there are millions of possible results for each search query—next time you do a Google search, look for the total number of results at the top of the page.

All   Images   News   Videos   Books   More

About 458,000,000 results (0.51 seconds)

Put simply, it all comes down to **popularity.**

Search engines have found that the more authoritative (a.k.a. popular) a web page (and the website the page belongs to) is, the more likely it is to provide better answers to their users.

Even though search engines don't publish authority metrics, several tools have developed their own metrics for these:

UR i   29
DR i   84
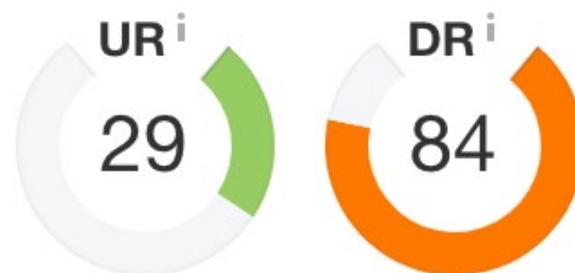
(UR is short for URL Rating and DR is short for Domain Rating—ahrefs' own metrics for the authority of a page and a website, respectively.)

In SEO, authority is mainly determined by links—more specifically, links from other sites to yours.

You can think of a link as a vote.

When a site links to your site, search engines will view that link as an endorsement of the content on your site.

Off-page optimization, also known as link building, is the process of **strategically acquiring links from third parties to your site to increase the authority of your pages.**

Generally speaking, more links = more authority.

However, not all links are created equal—here's the summary:

- Links from **unique domains** are more valuable (for example, 10 links from 10 different sites are better than 10 links from a single website)
- Links that come from **high-authority** pages and sites are more valuable (that is, pages and sites that also have a lot of links pointing to them)
- Links that come from sites that are **relevant to the theme or topic** of your content are more valuable (that is, links from sites about a similar topic are better than links from sites about a completely unrelated topic)
- Links that include **relevant keywords** are more valuable (for example, a link that contains your target keyword is better than one that just reads "click here")
- Links that are placed in the **higher parts and inside the body** of the page are more valuable (vs. links that are lower in the page, in the footer, sidebar, or header)

Link building is considered to be the hardest part about SEO—which is why, if you manage to master it, you'll have an **unfair advantage against the competition.**

Companies that are great at acquiring links stand to gain massive amounts of traffic. Professionals who are good at SEO are able to command higher salaries.

Here are some great resources for you to get started with link building:

- The Beginner's Guide to Link Building
- Link Building Strategies: The Complete List

Technical Optimization: Make Sure Search Engines Can Find Your Content

So far, we've been talking about all the high-leverage things in an SEO strategy.

If you think of SEO as building a house, we've set the foundation, walls, roof, added furniture, and did landscaping...

...now it's time to talk about the electrical, wiring, and plumbing.

Water and electricity won't make your house look or feel amazing—but without them, the rest just wouldn't matter.

That's how you should think about technical SEO.

Technical SEO is everything you do to make it easier for search engines to find and index your content correctly.

This can sound intimidating if you're not technical—like me!

Don't worry. You mainly need to take care of four major things:

1. Make sure search engines can index your pages

First things first, search engines can't index and rank your pages if they can't find them or if you're accidentally blocking them.

The easiest way to do prevent this is to:

- Submit an XML sitemap to search engines
- Check that your robots.txt file is not blocking crawlers from pages you want to rank

These are some helpful resources on how to do that:

- What is an XML sitemap and why should you have one?
- What is a robots.txt file?

2. Fix errors and broken links

Sometimes, search engines will find errors when crawling your website.

For example, maybe you've deleted a piece of content and its URL is returning a 404 error.

If third-party sites are linking to a URL that's showing an error, you're missing out on the value that's being passed from those links—search engines will consider these to be "broken links."

That's one of the biggest problems with errors.

You can solve this by regularly checking your site for errors (we'll explain the tools you can use for this in the "Tools" section of this chapter,) and then decide whether you need to fix that error or not—most errors can be fixed easily with a redirect to a new URL.

Here are some great guides for you to get started:

- HTTP Explained: The HTTP Status & Response Code Guide
- How to Create and Verify a 301 Redirect
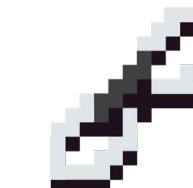
3. Make sure your site is mobile friendly

It's 2019. We don't need to explain that everyone browses the internet on their phones.

You already know how much it sucks to visit a site that's not mobile friendly.

In an effort to provide a better experience to their users, Google and other search engines have started to use **mobile friendliness** as a ranking factor (especially for mobile search results.)

If you're just getting started, most modern content management systems and website builders (e.g.

Wordpress, Squarespace, Shopify, etc.) have already taken care of this.

If you're dealing with an existing site that isn't mobile friendly, you might need to talk to a developer about fixing this—ASAP.
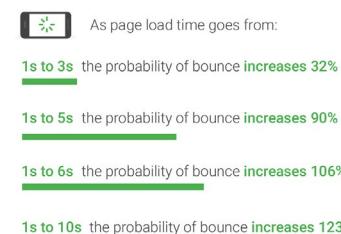
If you're not sure, Google has created a handy tool to test if your website is mobile friendly:

- Mobile-Friendly Test

4. Speed up your site

The last major thing that's really important is to make sure your site doesn't take forever to load.

from Find Out How You Stack Up to New Industry Benchmarks for Mobile Page Speed

As page load time goes from:

1s to 3s the probability of bounce increases 32%

1s to 5s the probability of bounce increases 90%

1s to 6s the probability of bounce increases 106%

1s to 10s the probability of bounce increases 123%

Source: Google/SOASTA Research, 2017.

think with Google

According to Google, the longer it takes for content to load on their devices, the less likely users are to engage with it.

Which is why you can usually expect to see a ranking increase when you speed up your site.

This usually involves things like improving or implementing caching, optimizing images, and getting rid of unnecessary code—if you don't have experience with this, you should probably talk to a developer.

Google has also created a helpful tool to check your site's speed:

- PageSpeed Insights

The important thing to remember with speed optimization is that it's very easy to go down a rabbit hole when trying to fix everything on the list provided by Google's PageSpeed Insights.

Don't do that.

It's usually enough to solve the big problems that are also easy to solve. Spending weeks solving a ton of small issues will probably have little effect on your rankings or your users' experience.

Once you've gone over those four major things—indexing, errors, mobile-friendliness, and speed—you'll probably have fixed most issues with your site.

To take things further, you can use these resources:

- The Complete 32-Point SEO Checklist
- The Ultimate SEO Audit

STATS: METRICS THAT MATTER FOR SEO

Let's dig into the nerd stuff.

Like with any digital marketing channel, there's a major risk that you'll feel overwhelmed by too many metrics to measure your SEO efforts.

At ClickMinded, our philosophy is that you can go a long way in any channel by understanding and focusing on just five metrics or less—that's it.

If we had to pick the most important metrics to focus on for SEO, they would be:

DOMAIN AUTHORITY

RANKING

BACKLINKS

ORGANIC TRAFFIC

Domain Authority & Page Authority

When Google stopped publishing their PageRank metric, they left a void for a metric that allowed SEOs to determine and compare the authority of different pages in the eyes of a search engine.

Domain Authority and Page Authority were the metrics developed by the SEO analytics company MOZ to fill this gap.

Later on, other third-party tools developed their own versions too: ahrefs came up with Domain Rating and URL Rating, and SEMRush came up with Domain Score and Page Score.
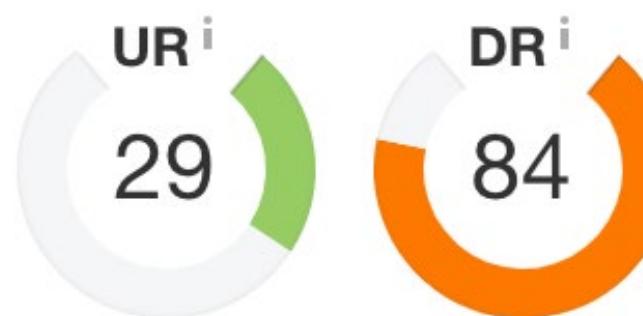
In essence, all of these mean the same thing and you can use them interchangeably:

- **Domain Authority / Domain Rating / Domain Score:** It's a measure of the authority of a domain (i.e. an entire website) based on the characteristics of the links pointing to all of its pages (check the "Off-Page Optimization" section of this chapter to learn more.)

- **Page Authority / URL Rating / Page Score:** It's a measure of the authority of a specific page (i.e. a single URL) based on the characteristics of the links pointing to all of its pages (check the "Off-Page Optimization" section of this chapter to learn more.)

Most people believe that, when it comes to search engine rankings, the authority of a page is more important than the authority of a domain.

For example, if you're comparing two URLs with the same content, the one with the highest *page authority* will generally rank higher. However, if they have similar *page authorities*, the *domain authority* will "break the tie."

UR i
29

DR i
84

Rankings and CTR

Rankings are perhaps the metric that SEOs obsess the most about.

A search engine ranking is just the position of a specific page in the search results for a specific query.

The default setting for search engines is to show 10 results in the first page. So "being in the first page of Google" means to be in the top 10 positions for a certain keyword.

However, SEOs have realized that being in the top 10 isn't enough anymore.

Several studies have found that more than half (>50% clickthrough rate) of the clicks on any search go to just the top 3 results.

When performing SEO, your goal is to have a low ranking and a high CTR.

Backlinks

We've already talked about the importance of links throughout this guide.

The backlinks metrics is just the number of links from third-party websites to a specific site.

If you combine this metric with an analysis of the page and domain authority of the linking sites, you can get a pretty good idea of what SEOs call a *"backlink profile"*: A combination of the quantity and quality of the links pointing to a site.

In SEO, you should strive to have:

● A high number of backlinks coming from high authority sites

● More backlinks from unique sites vs. a lot of backlinks from fewer unique sites

● Backlinks from sites related to the topic of your site vs. backlinks from sites about completely unrelated topics

Organic Traffic

We've talked about authority, rankings, and links—you could improve all of them but none of it will matter unless those optimizations lead to more traffic.

Organic traffic consists of all the visits to a website that are referred from a search engine.

Obviously, more organic traffic = better.

Plus, once you have access to this metric, you will be able to run deeper analysis such as the behavior of organic visitors vs. other channels, or even the average conversion rate and value of an organic visitor.

One thing to keep in mind with regards to organic traffic is the distinction between branded and non-branded searches.

● **Branded searches** are those that include the name of your brand or website in the keyword (e.g. "ClickMinded SEO course".) As you would imagine, there's likely very little competition for your brand name and people who search for these keywords are already aware of your brand—so organic traffic coming from branded searches is very similar to direct traffic (i.e. people who type your URL directly in the browser.)

● **Non-branded searches** are those that don't include your brand name in the keyword. When it comes to SEO, you'll generally want to increase organic traffic from non-branded searches, since that likely means you're getting new visitors who wouldn't have found you otherwise.

Business Metrics

Business metrics will depend on the stage of the funnel each piece of content is created for.

These will determine if your SEO traffic is actually generating results for your business or if it's just attracting the wrong kind of traffic.

Here are a couple of examples:

● The success of a blog post that's optimized to convert traffic into leads can be measured in terms of the number of **new leads** generated from organic traffic or the **conversion rate** from organic traffic to leads.

● The success of a pricing page that's optimized to get visitors to purchase can be measured by the **number of customers** it acquires from organic traffic or the **average value per organic visitor.**

To determine the impact of your SEO efforts in these metrics, you can use Google Analytics to filter organic traffic and drill down to specific URLs and check the performance for different goals.

Check out the **"Website Analytics Strategy" chapter of this guide** to learn more about tracking your business metrics.
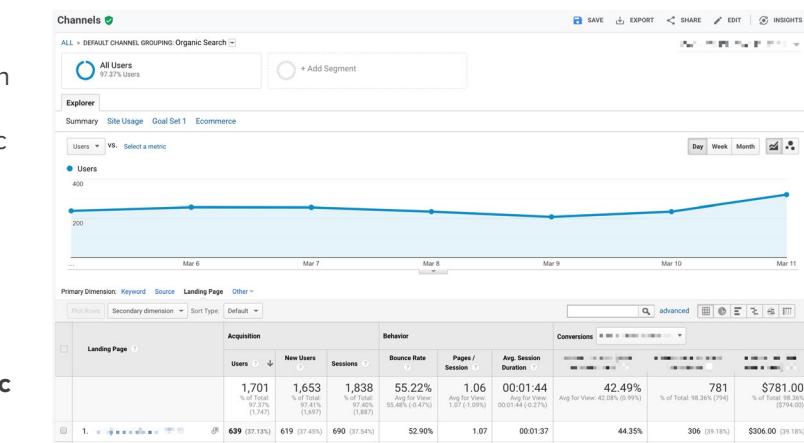
POWER-UPS: THE BEST SEO TOOLS

Now that you know how to play this level and the stats to look out for, it's time to stock up on items to help you execute.

SEO is a massive channel with tons of areas to specialize in. This means you'll have to pick from dozens of tools to perform any task.

To help you get started as quickly as possible, we will show you our favorite setup.

Basic SEO tools

These are must-haves. As an SEO, you should know your way around these.

- **Google Analytics:** The most popular web analytics tool in the world. You'll be able to use Google Analytics to keep track of your organic traffic and analyze how those visitors behave on your site (among many other things.)
  Check out Google Analytics

- **Google Search Console (or the equivalent for any search engine):** Google developed this tool to help website owners manage their search engine presence. With Search Console, you can keep track of crawling and indexing errors, get information about search rankings and CTR, and even get notified of manual penalties.
  Check out Google Search Console

On-Page Optimization Tools

Use the following tools to optimize the content of your pages for search engines.

- **Yoast SEO:** If you're using Wordpress to host your website, the Yoast plugin will make on-page SEO (and some technical SEO) 10x easier for you. We like to use it to simplify the management of our page metadata: Titles, meta description, and slugs.
  Check out Yoast SEO

Keyword Research Tools

Use these tools to find keyword opportunities, analyze search volume, and discover keyword competitiveness.

- **Google Ads Keyword Planner:** This used to be the go-to keyword research tool for most SEOs. However, Google has drastically limited the amount of data you can get from this tool unless you are willing to spend a good amount of money in their advertising platform. It's free and better than nothing—but we don't recommend using it unless you have no other option.
  Check out the Google Ads Keyword Planner

- **KWFinder:** This is our favorite tool for keyword research for beginners. It provides a ton of helpful features in a nice user interface for a nice price.
  Check out KWFinder

- **ahrefs:** Even though it does much more than just keyword research, ahrefs has built one of the largest and most robust databases of keyword data. Just like KWFinder, it offers a great set of easy-to-use features but it adds several advanced features that will come in handy for experienced SEOs.
  Check out ahrefs

- **LSI Graph:** You can use this tool to discover LSI (or contextually relevant) keywords that you can add to your pages and help search engines better understand the topic or theme of your content.
  Check out LSIGraph

Link Building Tools

These tools will make the challenging process of discovering link opportunities and obtaining backlinks A LOT easier.

- **ahrefs:** Basically our main tool for performing link building research and finding keyword opportunities. ahrefs provides valuable information on the backlink profile of millions of websites—which you can use to reverse-engineer their link building strategies.
  Check out ahrefs

- **BuzzStream:** Finding link opportunities is arguably the easiest part of link building. Reaching out to webmasters and actually acquiring links is a completely different story. You can think of Buzzstream as a CRM for link building—it allows you to find and store contact information, launch outreach campaigns, and manage relationships with all the contacts in your campaigns.
  Check out BuzzStream

Rank Tracking Tools

Use these tools to keep track of your search engine rankings for large sets of keywords.

- **Google Search Console:** You can get some data about your rankings directly from Google for free. However, the data is sometimes incomplete and hard to analyze because of the user interface. It's a good start if you don't want to spend money on this, but you'll outgrow this tool really quick if you're serious about SEO.
  Check out Google Search Console

- **SERPWatcher:** A simple tool to track ranking changes for unlimited domains. It's the best tool we've found that provides daily updates in rankings.
  Check out SERPWatcher

- **Ahrefs:** Just another one of the features provided by this all-in-one SEO tool. The only downside is the lack of daily ranking updates—however, if you're already using ahrefs for other SEO tasks, you might as well use it for rank tracking as well instead of paying for another tool.
  Check out ahrefs
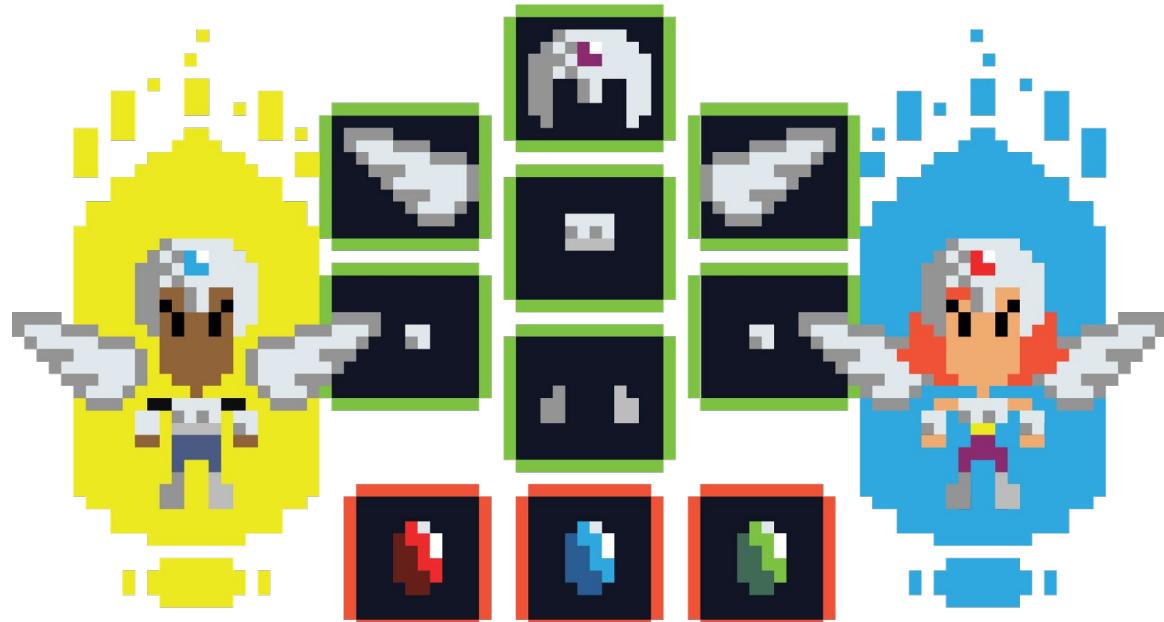
Unfortunately, there are a number of shady characters and companies in the digital marketing world - specifically within SEO.

When you're getting started, it can be hard to figure out who is legit, and who isn't.

On top of all that, there's also a *sub-industry* that has become more visible in the past few years—we call it the **SEO Media Industry.**

The SEO Media Industry is a group of websites and people whose sole purpose is to get your attention about every single "newsworthy" event in the SEO world—leading to a ton of unnecessary FOMO and overwhelming amounts of not-that-helpful information.

To help you stay away from both the bottom-feeders and the SEO Media Industry, we created a list of people and companies that, in our opinion, actually provide value to the SEO community and will make your journey into the SEO world easier.

Brian Dean (aka Backlinko): With his comprehensive SEO guides, Brian is able to break down complex topics into actionable steps that will actually help you get results.
Check out the Backlinko blog

Aleyda Solis: Focused on more technical aspects of SEO (specifically international SEO), Aleyda consistently puts out helpful tutorials and guides.
Follow Aleyda on Twitter

Glen Allsopp (aka ViperChill): Glen is one of the top link building experts in the game. We like Glen's content because it constantly pushes the boundaries of what's possible with super creative link building case studies.
Check out Glen's blog

ahrefs: You've probably figured out that we're big fans of this company. On top of creating one of the most powerful SEO tools in the market, ahrefs has built a crazy valuable blog with actionable tactics that both simplifies SEO for beginners and provides advanced tactics for experienced SEOs.
Check out the ahrefs blog

Matthew Howells-Barby: Matthew is the director of acquisition at Hubspot and one of the founders of the Traffic Think Tank, a private SEO community. He usually shares helpful and interesting information.
Follow Matthew on Twitter

Nat Eliason: Through his content, Nat reveals the tactics he uses to massively grow organic traffic with SEO-focused content marketing.
Check out Growth Machine's blog

The best way to learn SEO is to put it into practice.

Your experience in executing SEO campaigns (and actually growing organic traffic) trumps any amount of blog posts about SEO you may have read.

When you're a beginner, you have two options to obtain hands-on experience:

- **Use SEO to grow your own business.** If you already have a business, you can simply use what you've learned to get more traffic from search engines.

- **Find a business who you can help with SEO** and who will give you access to publish and make changes to their website (maybe this is a business you already work for, a friend's company, or a small business in the place where you live.)

- If you can't find an existing business to help, you can also **start your own website or blog** and try to get organic traffic—we know you might be excited about SEO and digital marketing, but try not to start a website in this niche since competition will make everything harder.

If you go with the latter option, it's likely that you'll have to wait longer to see results since you're starting from scratch—on the flipside, you will be able to try things (and break things) without risking anyone's business and you might build a valuable asset for yourself.

Either way, this is the framework you can use:

1. Finish reading this guide, of course.

   Outcome: You should have the fundamental knowledge of SEO to take a website, improve its rankings, and attract traffic from search engines.

2. Perform **keyword research** to find opportunities, understand the searcher intent, and analyze the competition behind those keywords. Check the "Keyword Research" section of this chapter for helpful resources.

   Outcome: You should come up with a comprehensive list of keywords with attractive search volumes and low competition, organized by similar searcher intent.

3. Create content (or edit existing content) and **optimize** it to target a keyword opportunity you identified in the previous step. Check the "On-Page Optimization" section of this chapter for helpful resources.

   Outcome: You should have between 2 and 5 content pages, each of which is perfectly optimized for its own target keyword.

4. Identify backlink opportunities and run outreach campaigns to **build links** to the content you created and optimized in the previous step. Check the "Off-Page Optimization" section of this chapter for helpful resources.

   Outcome: You should build at least one link to each page from third-party websites that belong to a similar or relevant niche.

5. Check that your website doesn't have any major **technical errors.** Check the "Technical Optimization" section of this chapter for helpful resources.

   Outcome: Your content should be properly indexed and not returning errors. Plus, your website should be mobile-friendly and fast.

6. Finally, **measure** the impact of your SEO efforts by tracking your rankings and organic traffic.

   Outcome: You should be able to use an analytics tool and a rank tracking tool to see the progress of your campaigns. Based on these results, you'll be able to formulate hypotheses, run tests, and iterate on steps 2-5 to continue growing organic traffic.

TRAPS: AVOID THESE SEO TRAPS

The SEO industry is full of terrible advice—perhaps more than any other digital marketing channel.

In the best of cases, following this advice will make you waste a ton of time and money on things that don't work.

In the worst cases, you might end with an algorithmic or manual penalty from a search engine.

Navigating these can be really hard for beginners—so we put together a **list of things you should avoid:**

Black-Hat Tactics

SEO is not fast.

This can lead people to want to try tactics that promise faster and drastic results—most of which don't work.

However, there are some tactics that might be effective but also go against search engines' terms of service.

In the SEO industry, these are called *"black-hat tactics."*

Even though some of these might provide quick results, we recommend just staying away from them altogether.

The risks greatly outweigh the benefits of using these tactics and search engines ALWAYS catch up with them.

In general, stay away from things like private blog networks (PBNs), paid links, and link exchanges.

Overly-Technical Advice

Many SEOs love to get super technical—sometimes way too technical.

This is normal and not meant with bad intentions. Many SEO experts work with massive companies in which small technical details can generate huge results.

When you subscribe to a bunch of SEO newsletters, it's normal to feel FOMO about these technical tactics.

However, if you're just getting started, it's usually better to stay away from overly technical tactics and just focus on getting a solid grasp on the fundamentals of SEO.

Rule of thumb: If something is way too complicated for you to understand after reading this guide, it's probably too niche for you to worry about right now.

In general, stay away from things like AMP, structured data and schema markup, too much speed optimization, or voice search (at least for now—you can always go down these rabbit holes when you have tons of organic traffic!)

Obsolete Advice

Search engines constantly update their algorithms.

The same things that worked 10 years ago probably won't work today.

A lot of shady (or flat-out incompetent) SEOs will provide obsolete advice.

Always double check the sources of information you find online or the SEO services that are offered to you. Make sure that what they're recommending is still up-to-date. Check out the "Helpers" section of this guide to find people and companies providing solid information.

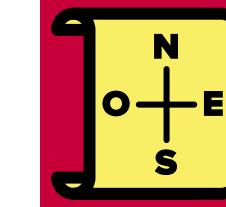In general, avoid anyone who mentions meta keywords, keyword density, or comment spamming.
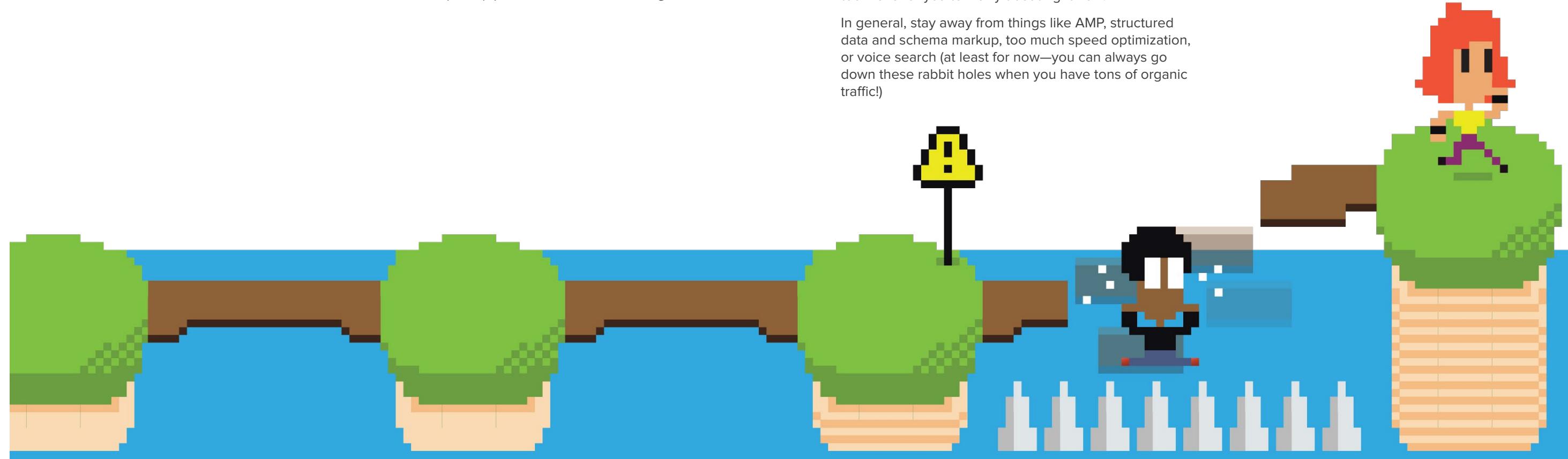
5 THE EMAIL MARKETING STRATEGY GUIDE

The ultimate tutorial on **how to create massively profitable email marketing campaigns.**

WORLD MAP: WHAT IS EMAIL MARKETING?

If you're an experienced digital marketer, I'm going to tell you something you definitely already know.

We've had email since the beginning of the internet and, because it's not a shiny new object, and because it's so boring, it often gets overlooked by internet marketers who are new to the game.

Email marketing is the most under-rated and profitable digital marketing channel. Period.

There are a ton of reasons why this is the case. We'll dive into those in a bit. But before we do, I just want to be clear:

Email marketing is not a trend. It's not going to disappear anytime soon, and it will remain one of the most profitable marketing channels for many businesses.

When I got started, I thought email marketing would be the same as sending emails from my Gmail account...but with A LOT more people on the receiving end.

"Probably not that interesting."

Then I learned that email marketing has a lot less of hitting the "Send" button and a lot more of building stuff like this

Which is much more interesting and fun.

I also thought the only people still using email were 65+ aunts and uncles sending conspiracy theories in chain emails.
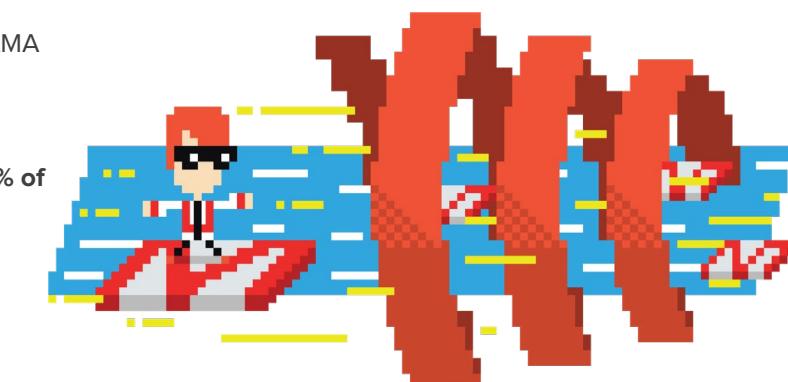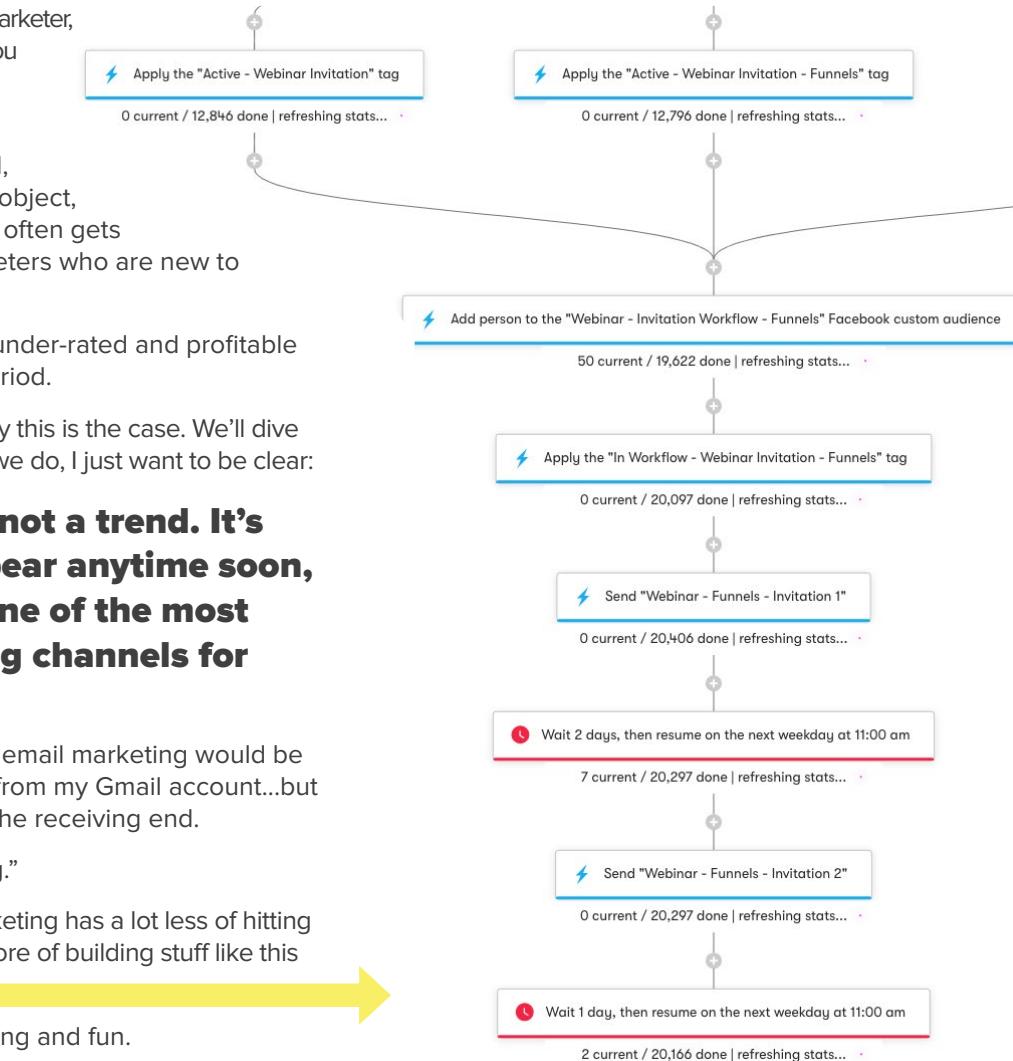
Re: RE: Re: Re: re: OPEN IMMEDIATELY, PROOF OBAMA WAS BORN IN KENYA!!!11

"Probably not that profitable."

However, ClickMinded (this website) makes **over 45% of its revenue** from email marketing.

Which makes it a lot more profitable than any other channel.

I was wrong because I didn't understand how email marketing works.

⚡ Apply the "Active - Webinar Invitation" tag
0 current / 12,846 done | refreshing stats...

⚡ Apply the "Active - Webinar Invitation - Funnels" tag
0 current / 12,796 done | refreshing stats...

⚡ Add person to the "Webinar - Invitation Workflow - Funnels" Facebook custom audience
50 current / 19,622 done | refreshing stats...

⚡ Apply the "In Workflow - Webinar Invitation - Funnels" tag
0 current / 20,097 done | refreshing stats...

⚡ Send "Webinar - Funnels - Invitation 1"
0 current / 20,406 done | refreshing stats...

🕐 Wait 2 days, then resume on the next weekday at 11:00 am
7 current / 20,297 done | refreshing stats...

⚡ Send "Webinar - Funnels - Invitation 2"
0 current / 20,297 done | refreshing stats...

🕐 Wait 1 day, then resume on the next weekday at 11:00 am
2 current / 20,166 done | refreshing stats...

Email marketing is all about increasing the speed at which people move through your sales funnel.

(For a refresher on sales funnels, check out the "Sales Funnel Strategy" chapter of this guide.)

You do that by sending each of your subscribers content that:

- Is relevant to their specific interests—for example, you don't want to send an email about a sale on beef to your vegetarian subscribers.

- Matches the stage of the funnel they are in—for example, an email about a loyalty program will be a better fit for existing customers than for new subscribers.

- Comes at the right moment for them to take action—for example, you could send people who added an item to their cart but didn't check out a reminder to purchase within a few hours of abandoning the cart.

In the next section of this guide, you'll learn EXACTLY how to do that.

ClickMinded
THE CONVERSION FUNNEL
www.clickminded.com
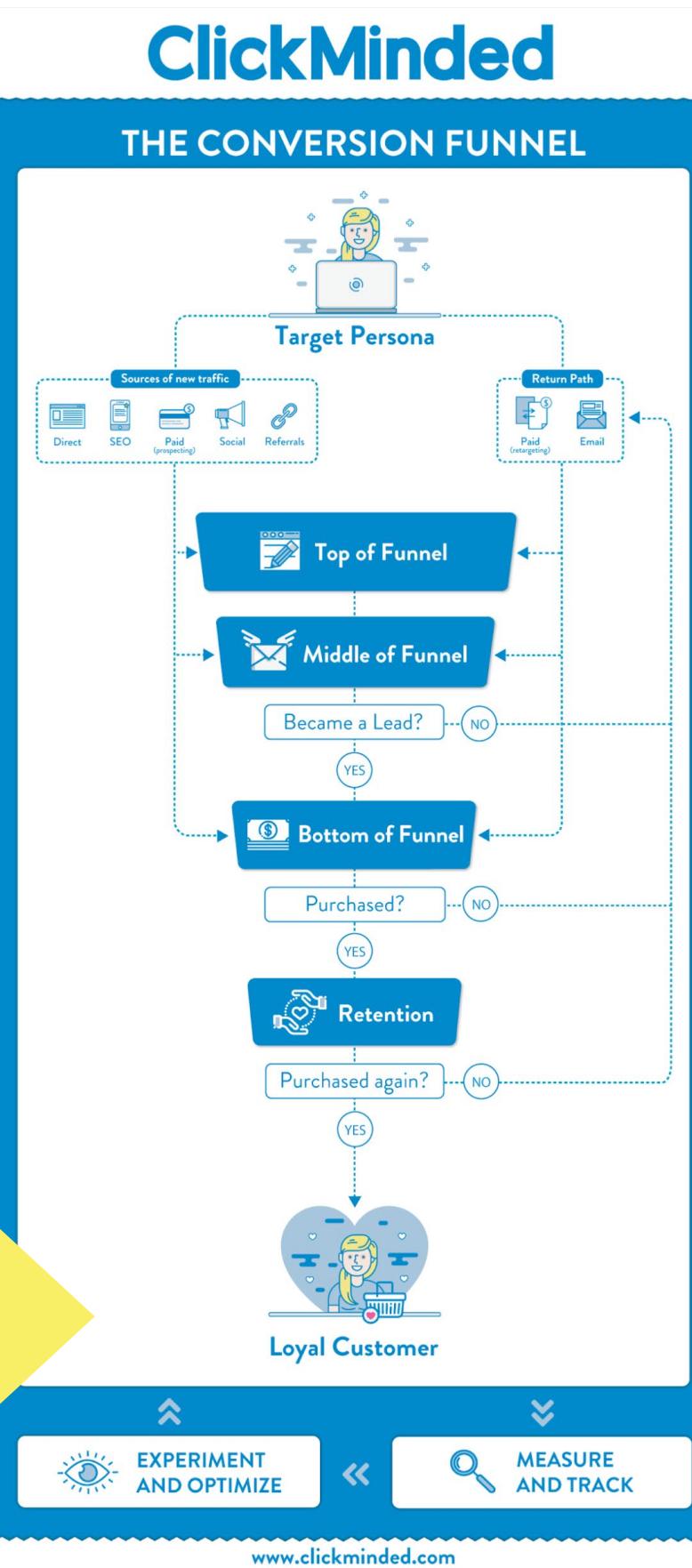
STRATEGY: HOW TO CREATE MASSIVELY PROFITABLE EMAIL MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

A lot of people's entire email marketing strategy consists of:

1. Sending a welcome email to new subscribers
2. Sending a newsletter every week or month
3. Sending a seasonal promotional campaign

This is a great start...

...but it's only 1% of the potential this channel can offer.

The problem a great email marketing strategy solves is scale.

You need to send each of your subscribers a relevant, timely message that motivates them to move from one stage of the funnel to the next.

But when you have hundreds or thousands of subscribers, not everyone will have the same interests, be on the same stage of the funnel, or be ready to take the same action.

That's why you need an email marketing strategy. Here's how to create yours:

1. Organize your subscribers based on their interests, preferences, and stage of the funnel—this is the process of segmenting your subscribers.

2. Understand the different ways you can reach your subscribers with email—you should know the basic types of emails and distribution methods.

3. Map your email campaigns against each step of the sales funnel—in other words, create your lifecycle campaigns.

4. Follow best practices to write emails that people actually open, read, and click.

5. Make sure your emails can actually reach your subscribers and they can view them correctly—this is the deliverability and compatibility step.

We'll go over each of these steps next.

Subscriber Segmentation: Getting to Know Your Email Subscribers

Have you ever been on a blind date?

If you have, I bet you had this exact thought:

"We don't know each other—what are we going to talk about?"

That's how you should feel if all you know about your subscribers is their email address.

Email marketing is the opposite of going on a blind date.

For email marketing to work, you need to send each of your subscribers content they are interested in and that matches where they are in the sales funnel.

To do that, you have to know as much as possible about each of your subscribers before you email them.

Lucky for you, there are several ways to do this.
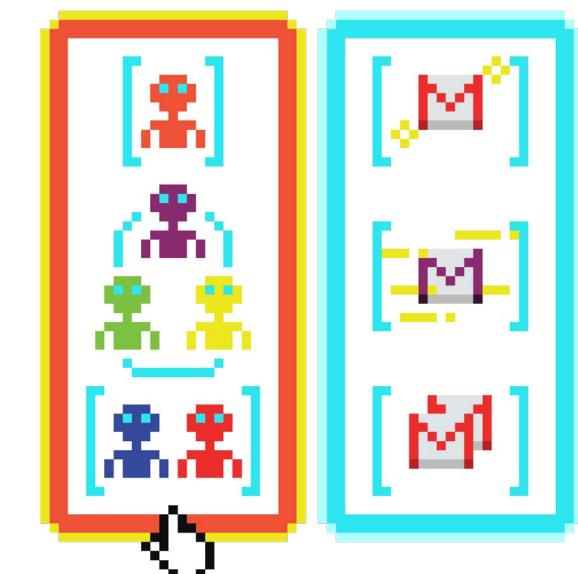
Gathering Explicit Data

Explicit data is the one your subscribers give to you directly.

The typical way you gather this information is via form submissions or surveys.

In the example above, Pinterest is collecting first name, age, and gender—those are all provided directly by their users and their email marketer can use them to personalize the content sent to them via email.

This is a super easy way to learn more about your subscribers—which is why it's easy to overdo it.

In general, people hate filling out forms.

So when you add too many fields to a form, it dramatically decreases the conversion rate for that form.

Ask too many questions and you might end up with a lot fewer people signing up for your list.

Rule of thumb: Ask only what's strictly necessary and rely on implicit data for the rest.
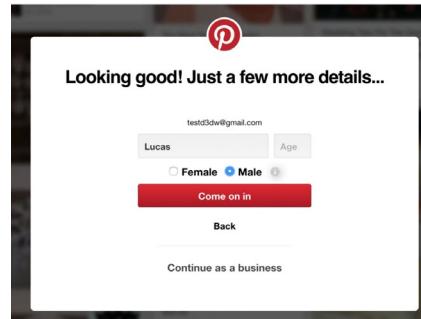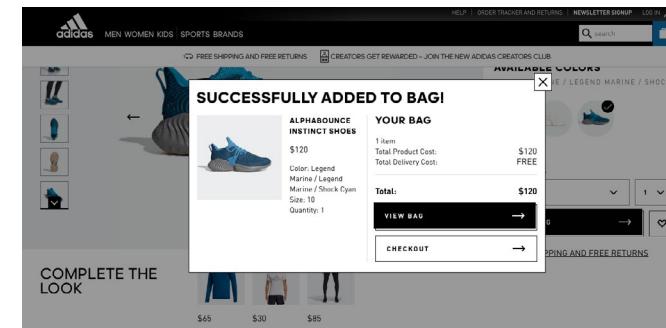

Gathering Implicit Data

Implicit data is that which is collected (sometimes creepily) through user behavior or other sources.

First, there's a lot you can infer about a subscriber based on what they do.

For example, let's say someone visits the Adidas website, browses the section for "running shoes", and adds a pair of shoes they like to the cart before leaving the site.


If you were Adidas' email marketer you would already know this person is interested in running shoes, the specific model they want, their shoe size, and that they are almost ready to buy (bottom-of-the-funnel).

The subscriber didn't need to fill a form telling you all of that—you could figure that out pretty easily yourself.
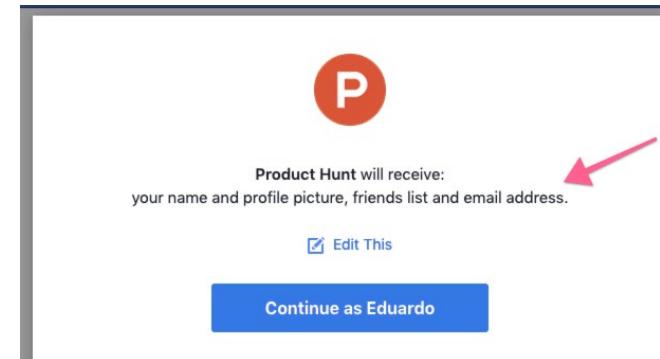
This is the power of analyzing a user's behavior.

Another method of gathering implicit data is by collecting it from other sources.
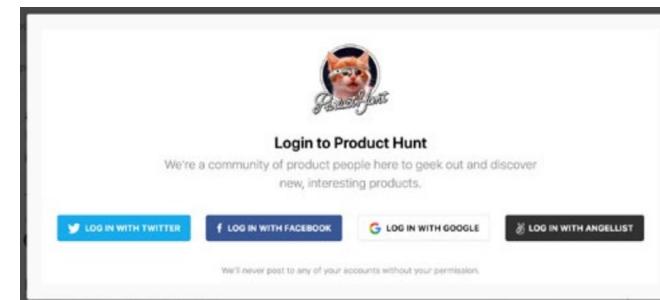
A common way to do this is by allowing users to register by using an account from another service.

When users click on those, they usually grant access to additional data.

Apps like Facebook, Google, or Twitter already have a lot of data about their users, so email marketers can leverage it to segment their subscribers.

To get started with subscriber segmentation, check out these resources:

- [How to Segment Email Lists for More Opens, Click-Throughs and Conversions](#)
- [30 Ways to Slice Your Email Database for Better Email List Segmentation](#)

Email Types and Distribution Methods: Understanding the Basics of Email Marketing

Before you send your first campaign, you need to understand the channel that's at your disposal: Email.

Take a look at this picture.

Aside from the content, there doesn't seem to be much of a difference between those two emails—both were sent to me by Tommy Griffith and they look the same in my inbox.

But they are different in two fundamental ways:

Email Types: Marketing vs. Transactional

Marketing emails are those sent for commercial purposes.

These emails contain promotional content meant to engage the user in some way that benefits the business.

Some examples include campaigns like welcome emails, newsletters, special offers, or announcements.

In the email on the image above, we're letting users of our *SOP Library* know that there is something new happening with the product—we send these because we want to increase usage of our *SOP Library*, which will help reduce cancellations.

Transactional emails are those sent because a user took an action that required us to send additional information.

These emails are usually directly requested by the user in one way or another.

Some examples of transactional emails include receipts, login information, support ticket information, and purchase confirmations.

In the email from the image above, the user has registered for a mini-course and we're sending the credentials necessary to access the content.

In general, you should read up on regulations related to email marketing for the countries you do business in, and learn when to use transactional or marketing emails, as well as the guidelines you need to follow for each of them.

Distribution Methods: Broadcast vs. Automated
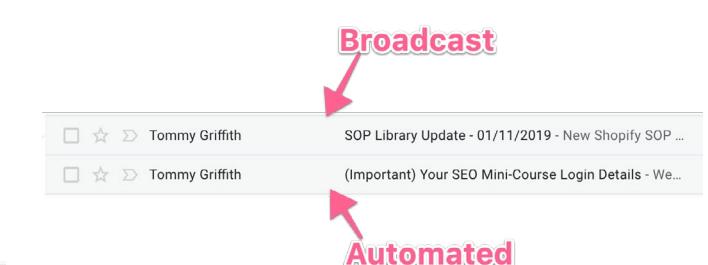
Broadcast emails are sent (or triggered) manually—meaning that someone specified the specific date and time when the email was going to be sent.

Some examples of broadcast campaigns include announcements and one-time offers.

In the case of the image above, the user is receiving an update about a new resource that was just added to their product.

Automated emails are sent automatically based on an action taken by the user on the site. There isn't a person manually sending emails to each person.

Some examples of automated campaigns include cart abandonment emails, order confirmations, welcome emails, etc.

In general, you should aim for the large majority of your emails to be automated—because these are triggered by subscriber actions, they are significantly more likely to be timely and relevant.
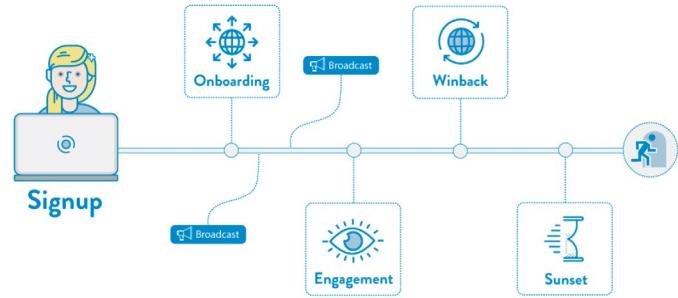
Lifecycle Campaigns: Accelerate Your Sales Funnel

This is my favorite part of email marketing—planning campaigns.

In this step, you'll design a comprehensive email messaging strategy to move your subscribers through the sales funnel.

To do that, you only need four types of campaigns.

These four types of campaigns will:

- Welcome subscribers and get them to perform their first critical actions
- Turn subscribers into customers and advocates
- Re-engage subscribers who have dropped out of the funnel
- Keep your "list hygiene"

Keep in mind, when we say four campaigns, we don't mean four emails. Each of these campaigns will likely have several emails within them.

Let's go over each of these next.

Onboarding Campaigns

- **Trigger:** These campaigns will be sent soon after the subscriber joins your list or signs up for your product.
- **Goal:** You'll use onboarding campaigns to try to get subscribers to perform an important action.

Emails sent right after the subscriber has joined your email list typically have higher engagement (read more about open and click rates in the "Stats" section of this guide)—that's why it's a great time to include an important call to action.

Some of these actions can be:

1. Completing their user profile
2. Making a purchase
3. Check out your most popular content
4. Inviting friends or other users
5. Downloading an app

Even though this is usually a single campaign, some companies might use several "tiers" of onboarding:

6. **Onboarding new subscribers:** To welcome people who join the email list but are not customers or users of the product (for example, when they join the email newsletter or download a lead magnet)

7. **Onboarding new users/customers:** To welcome people who have signed up for a product (for example, a web application like Airbnb) or became a paying customer (for example, purchased a private consulting call)

Here are some examples of onboarding campaigns we like:

Slack, a messaging platform, knows you'll only continue using it (and eventually become a paying customer) if your team starts using it too—so this is what they send to people who create a team on the platform:
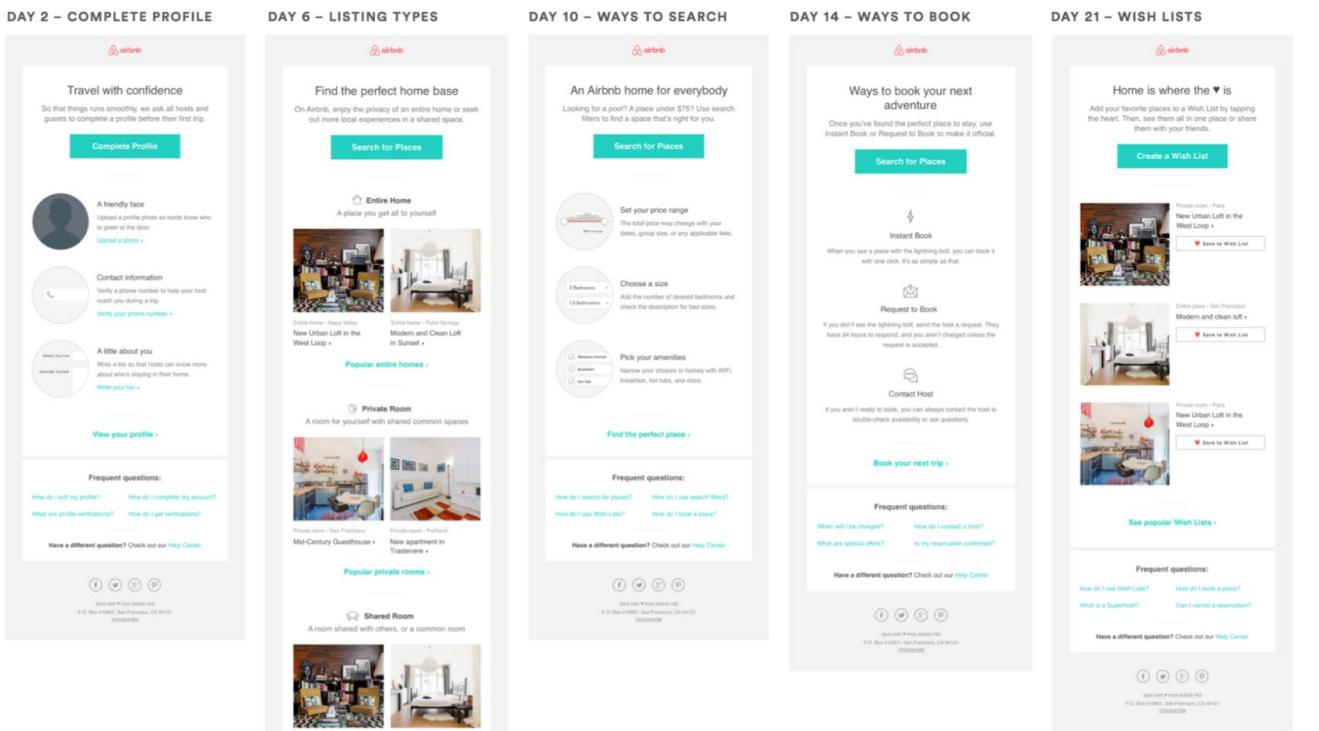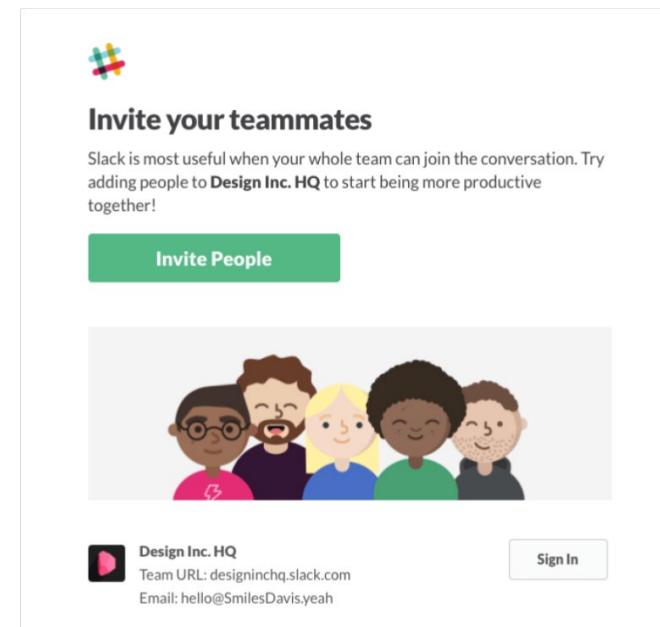
If there are several important actions a user must take, then you can also choose to send one email for each of those actions as part of the onboarding campaign.

For example, Airbnb sends 5 onboarding emails over 21 days, each of them explaining a different part of the tool.

To create your onboarding campaign, you just need to identify which are the most important actions a subscriber must take after signing up and ask them to do exactly that.

To get started, check out these resources:

- 6 Amazing Welcome Email Examples (and How to Write Yours)
- How to Craft the Best Welcome Email to Build Trust With New Subscribers
- Beautiful Welcome Email Examples

Engagement Campaigns

- **Trigger:** Depending on the campaign, these can be triggered manually or by actions the user takes.
- **Goal:** Nurture subscribers and convert them into customers, repeat buyers, and advocates.

Most of the campaigns on your email strategy will be engagement emails.

The most common example of an engagement campaign is content newsletters, but they are not the only type.

You should create a campaign for each important goal or milestone within your sales funnel—for example:

- Educate users about the problem your product/service solves (middle-of-the-funnel)
- Provide free resources to subscribers (middle-of-the-funnel)
- Invite subscribers to sign up for a free trial, webinar, course, or demo (middle-of-the-funnel)
- Send a limited-time or seasonal offer (bottom-of-the-funnel)
- Remind subscribers to finish an incomplete purchase (bottom-of-the-funnel)
- Increase the usage of a tool (retention)
- Send progress or usage reports (retention)
- Upsell or cross-sell on other products (monetization)
- Offer referral or loyalty bonuses (monetization)

Here are some examples of engagement campaigns we like:

Sumo regularly shares new content and case studies that typically educate subscribers on how to use their tools to grow online businesses.
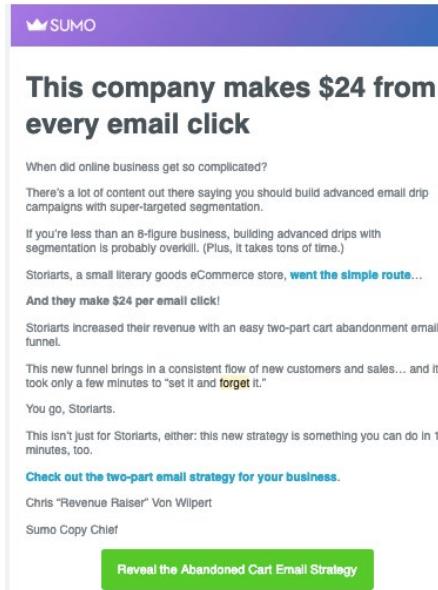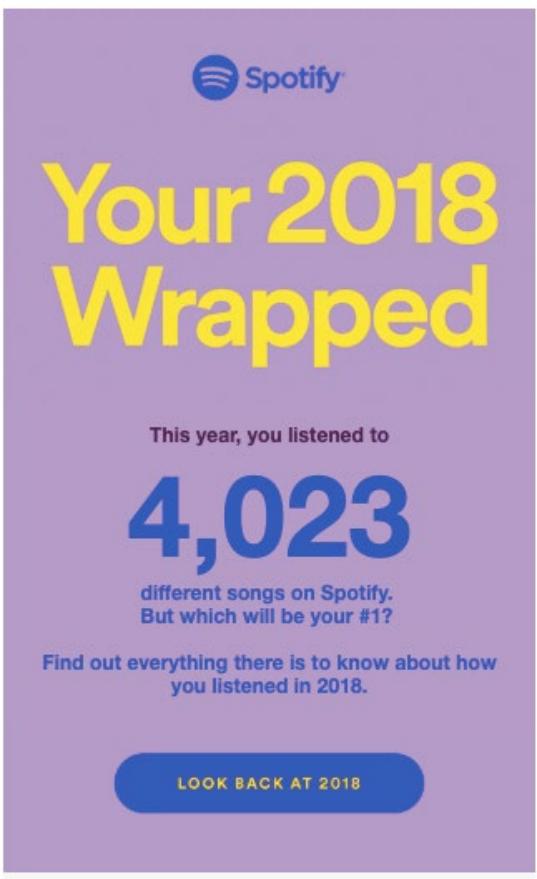

Casper usually sends a Black Friday campaign meant to drive sales.
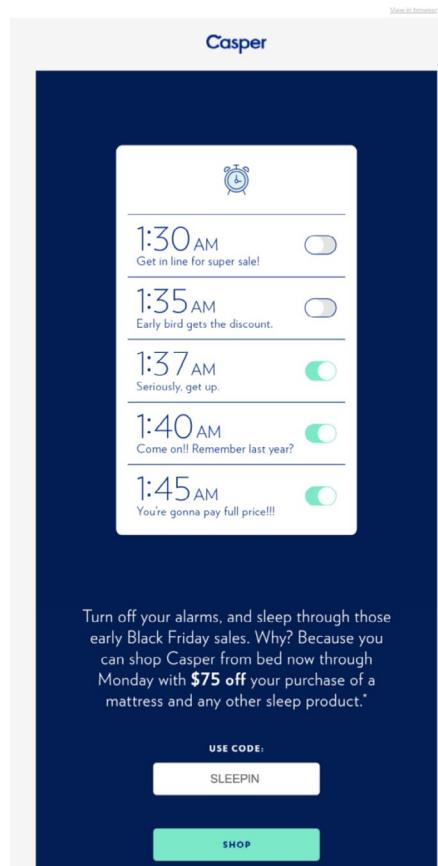
Spotify's year-in-review emails are a great way to get an increase in usage.

To get started, you should at least consider these three campaigns:

- Newsletters sharing helpful content
- Launch or seasonal emails (e.g. Black Friday)
- Cart-abandonment emails

These are some helpful resources:

- 15 Email Newsletter Examples We Love Getting in Our Inboxes
- 7 Unbelievable Product Launch Emails [Tried-and-Tested Templates]
- 5 Black Friday Email Campaigns You Can Steal (Templates Included)
- 13 Amazing Abandoned Cart Emails (And What You Can Learn From Them)

Plus, you should subscribe to email lists from your favorite entrepreneurs, products, or companies to get inspiration on new campaigns to launch.

Win-Back Campaigns

- **Trigger:** Lack of activity in engagement campaigns.
- **Goal:** Get subscribers who have fallen out or are stuck in the funnel to re-engage with your content.

Some of your users will not interact (open or click) with your engagement campaigns or stop using your product.

A win-back campaign is your opportunity to re-engage them.

You can do this by:

- Simply reminding them of what they're missing out
- Letting them know about new features or products available
- Offering a special discount

These are some win-back campaigns we really like:

Grammarly sends inactive users a badge letting them know they can start using their writing tools again.
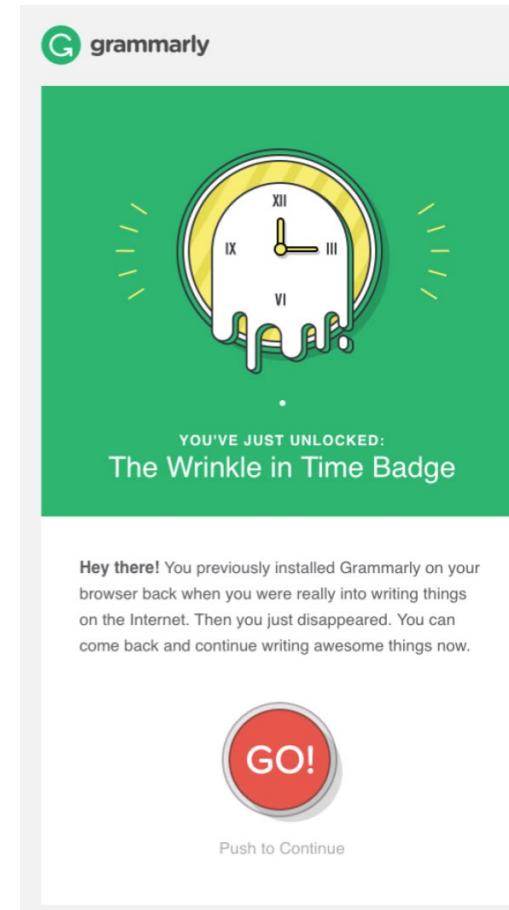
Yelp sends personalized recommendations that are highly relevant to each user, which they can check out on their website.
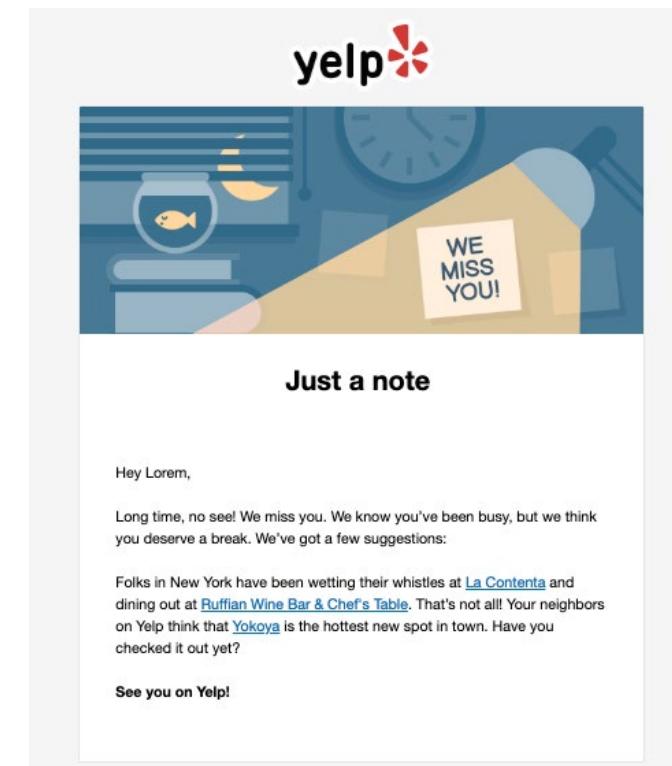
To get inspiration for your win-back campaign, check out these great examples from Mailcharts.

Sunset Campaigns

- **Trigger:** Lack of activity in win-back campaign.
- **Goal:** Segment out inactive subscribers and maintain list hygiene.

As we'll explain in the "Deliverability" section of this chapter, inactive subscribers can have a negative impact on your entire email strategy—which can end up reducing the number of active subscribers getting your emails.

List hygiene is the process of segmenting inactive subscribers from your email list, so you can stop sending them future campaigns.
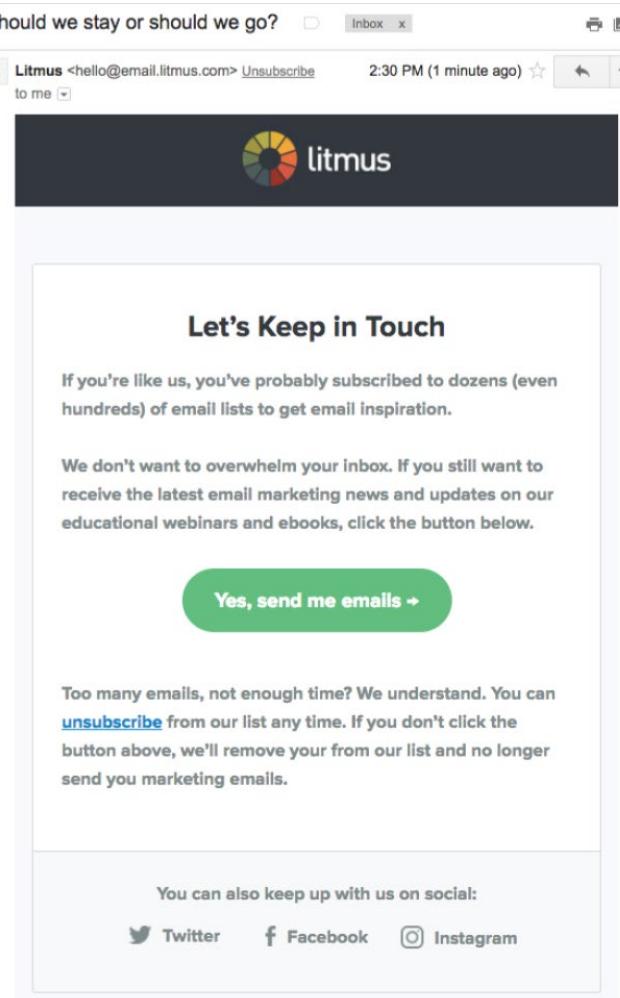
Sunset campaigns allow you to identify these users.

The way they work is simple:

1. You ask inactive subscribers if they want to keep receiving content
2. Those who don't explicitly opt-in, get segmented and will not receive any more engagement campaigns

Here are some sunset campaigns we like.

Litmus gives its inactive subscriber the option to opt-in to keep receiving emails or unsubscribe.

Buzzfeed, on the other hand, lets subscribers know they will be automatically removed if they don't opt in.
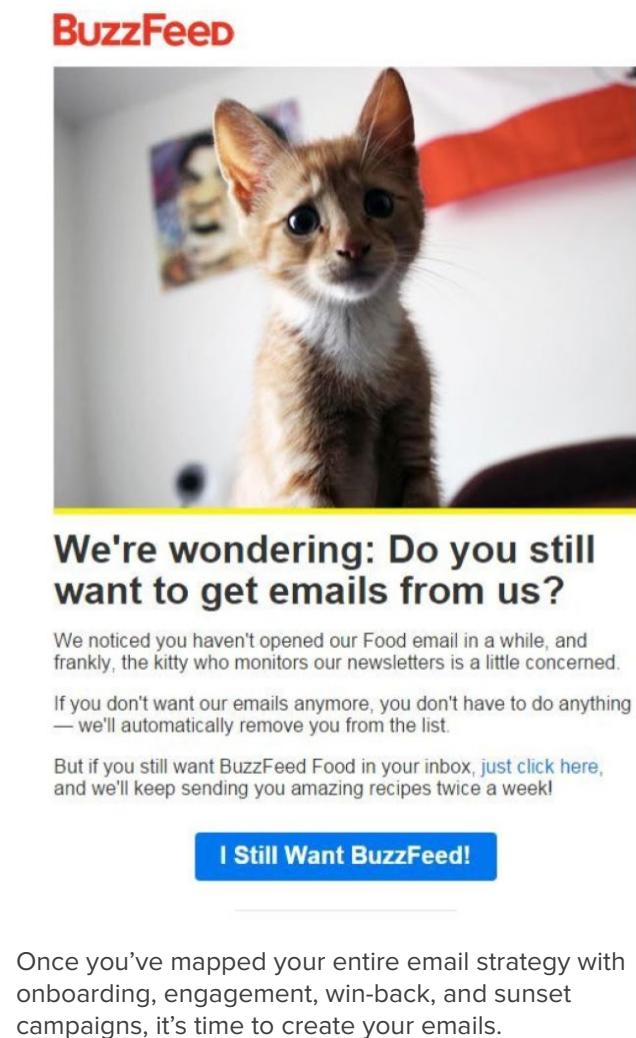
Once you've mapped your entire email strategy with onboarding, engagement, win-back, and sunset campaigns, it's time to create your emails.

Did you know that people spend an average of just 11.1 seconds reading your emails?

To create emails people actually open and read, you need to optimize four elements.

1. The subject line
2. The email preheader
3. The body copy
4. The call-to-action

Let's go over each of these.

Subject Lines

Think of your subject lines in the way a journalist has to think of their headlines or an author has to think of the title for his book.

If you don't write a great subject line, most people won't see the content inside the email (no matter how amazing it might be.)

To write great subject lines, you should follow some best practices:

- **Keep subject lines under 50 characters.** A lot of people read email on mobile devices, which can cause long subject lines to be truncated (like Fab's email in the example above)

- **Only use emojis if the subject line still makes sense without it.** Not all email clients render emojis in subject lines, which can cause emails like "5 Secluded Beaches We ❤" to be read as "5 Secluded Beaches We " by its recipients

- **Include personalized content** (when possible). Using the data you gathered from your subscribers, include relevant information like their name or location-specific content

- **Try to use numbers, stats, or data.** Several studies have found that subject lines including numbers are more likely to be opened

- **Write in the second person and use active verbs.** Instead of writing a subject line like "How to Save Up to 30% While Grocery Shopping", opt for "Save Up to 30% on Your Groceries"

- Use power words. These are words that evoke emotion or inspire curiosity in the reader

To learn more about writing subject lines, check out these resources:

- 164 Best Email Subject Lines to Boost Your Email Open Rates
- How to Write Captivating Email Subject Lines
- 401+ Ridiculously Useful Power Words To Increase Conversions
- Use CoShedule's Headline Analyzer to check your subject lines

Email Preheader

The preheader is a complement to your subject line—it allows you to give recipients a preview of what's inside the email.

By adding preheaders to your emails, you can increase the open rates of your campaigns.
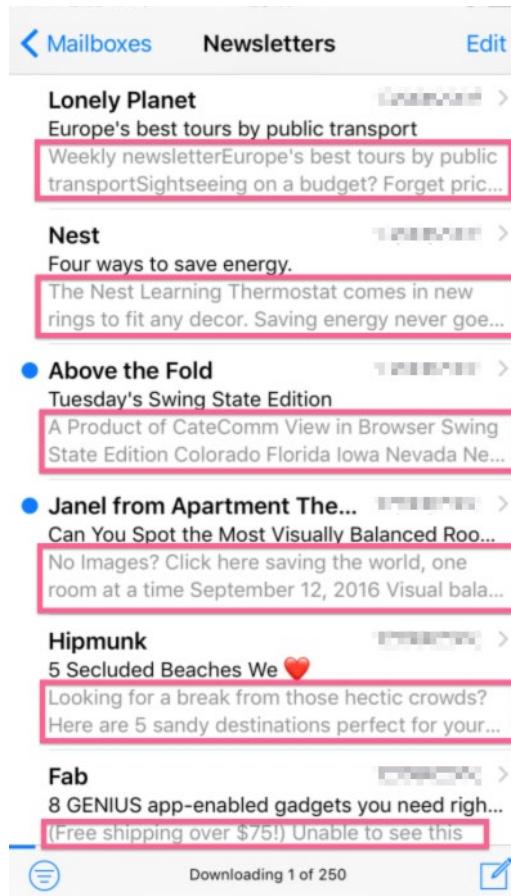
Almost all email clients will include this preview of the content—but if they don't write a specific preheader, this preview will be populated automatically with whatever is at the top of the email body.

That's why you can see some weird stuff and spacing in Lonely Planet's email from the screenshot above.

Make sure you add a preheader to your emails and follow the same principles we outlined for subject lines in order to increase your open rates.

Body Copy

This is the meat and potatoes of your email.

The body copy is the content inside of the email that will convince your subscribers to take action.
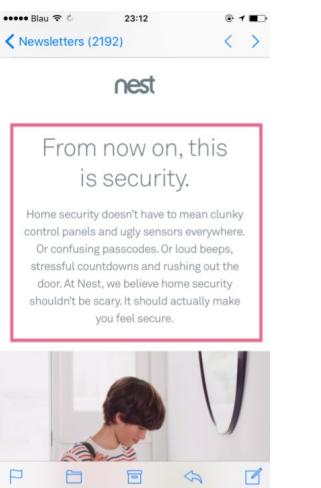

These are some best practices for writing great email copy:

- **Keep your paragraphs short.** No one likes to see a wall of text, especially on mobile devices

- **Use headings, bolding, lists.** This helps break up the text and increases the likelihood that people will keep reading. This is especially important if you are writing long emails

- **Don't put important copy inside an image.** Some email clients hide images by default—in those cases, your email will be hard to understand unless the subscriber manually enables images in the email

- **Include personalized content (when possible).** You can go beyond the just a name and location—use the data you have about your subscribers (interests, preferences, purchase history, etc.) to make sure the copy is as relevant as possible

- **Make sure you deliver on the promise of the subject line.** Users hate clickbait, so you must be ready to align the content of the subject line with what's included in the body copy

- **Include data, write in the second person, use active verbs.** Just like with your subject lines

To get started, check out these resources:

- The Ultimate Guide to Email Copywriting

- Drip Script's email templates

Call-to-Action

This is the moment of truth.

You've gotten the user to open and read your email—now they're ready to take the next step.

A great call-to-action is a simple and direct message that encourages the reader to act immediately.

Here's how to write a call-to-action for your emails:

- **Keep it short.** The user needs to understand what the action is at a glance.

- **Write in the first person, use active verbs.** Use "Reserve My Seat" instead of "Click Here to Reserve a Seat".

- **Try to include the call-to-action above the fold.** When possible, make sure the call-to-action is visible to the user without the need for scrolling. If you're sending a long email, don't be afraid to include your call-to-action several times throughout the email.

- **Stick to a single action per email.** Don't ask your subscribers to do several things in a single email—instead, send them several emails with unique calls-to-action.

- **Make sure it stands out.** Your call-to-action should be easy to spot and click—you can choose to bold the text or even make it look like a button.

To get started with your calls-to-action, check out these resources:

- 75 Calls to Action to Use in Your Email Marketing Campaigns

- How to Craft the Perfect Email Call-to-Action (+ Examples)
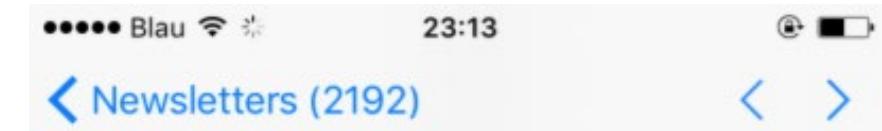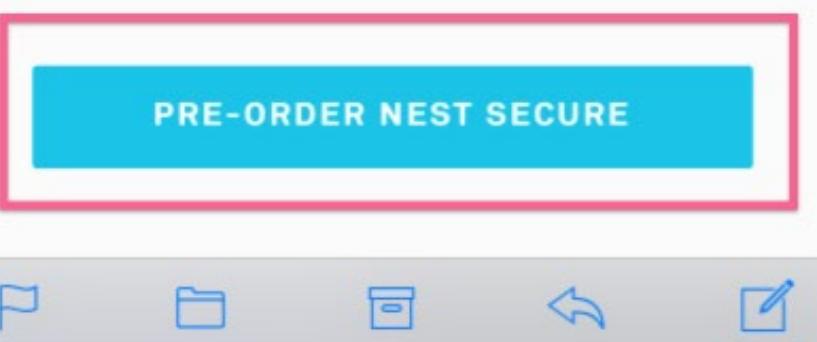
Deliverability and Compatibility: Making Sure Your Emails Reach Your Subscribers and That They Can View Them.

Let's recap your progress so far.

At this point in your email marketing strategy, you know how to collect data and segment subscribers, you understand the types of email and methods of delivery, have designed campaigns for the entire lifecycle of your subscribers, and have written awesome email copy.

There's just one more thing you have to do to complete your strategy.

The last step is the more technical side of email marketing.

This is the stuff that won't necessarily make your emails perform 10x better...

...but can ruin your entire strategy if you don't get them right.

Deliverability

All of your efforts will be for nothing if your emails don't get to your user's inbox.

The worst thing that can happen to your emails is getting caught on a spam firewall or put in the spam folder of your subscriber's email account.

There isn't a single thing you can do alone to increase deliverability. Instead, you have to do a bunch of stuff to make sure your deliverability doesn't drop.

- **Maintain list hygiene.** You should segment and remove inactive users from your campaigns (check the "Sunset Campaign" section above) to avoid sending emails to spam traps—these are email address set up to catch spammers. If you send an email to a spam trap, your email domain might end up on a spam blacklist.

- **Ask subscribers to add you to their whitelist/list of contacts.** This sends a signal to email clients that your emails are trustworthy and not spam.

- **Check and improve your email stats.** Most email service providers allow you to see open, click, and unsubscribe rates (check the "Stats" section below to learn more about these)—you should try to keep your engagement metrics (opens and clicks) high and your unsubscribe rate low.
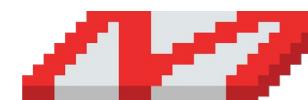
- **Avoid using too many spammy words.** There are certain words and phrases spam filters tend to associate with email spam. Even though you can still use these and not be marked as spam (or not use them and be caught in the spam filter), it's better to avoid them when possible.

- **Don't buy email lists.** It's sad that we have to say this, but just don't try to buy lists of emails and spam them—those recipients will mark you as spam. Only send emails to people who have opted into your list.

- **Follow spam-related laws and regulations.** In most countries, it's mandatory to include an unsubscribe button on all marketing emails. Some people will unsubscribe, but it's better they do that than mark your emails as spam.

- **[Only if you are a large sender] Consider setting up a custom sending domain and dedicated IP.** This is a more technical aspect of deliverability that only matters if you are truly sending tons of emails (over ~25k email per week). If that isn't the case, it's possible this could hurt your deliverability—just stick with the default setup of your email service provider.
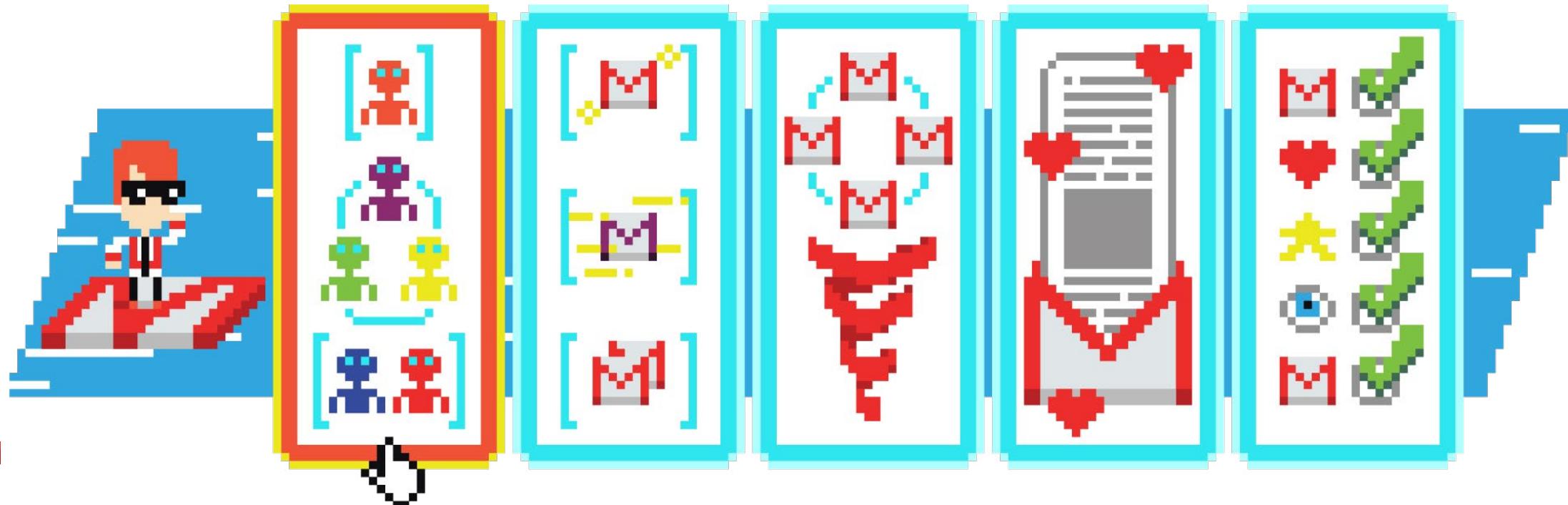
Compatibility

This is the other major technical aspect you need to plan for.

Once your email has successfully made its way into your subscriber's inbox, you have to make sure they can actually see its contents.

There are two major aspects of compatibility:

- **Mobile friendliness.** A large percentage of users view emails on their phones (and that percentage will only keep increasing). You have to make sure you use a responsive template for your emails—if you are using templates provided by your email service provider, they are likely already mobile friendly
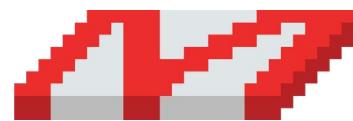
- **Email client rendering.** A typical step before launching a campaign is to send yourself a test email to check that everything looks fine. However, the fact that you can see it correctly, doesn't mean all your recipients will. Every email client (Gmail, Yahoo, Apple Mail, Outlook, Gmail app, etc.) renders your email differently. Some email service providers allow you to preview how your emails will look in major email clients, if not you might want to consider using a third-party service for this. (Check the "Tools" section in this guide)
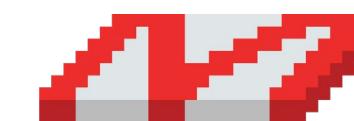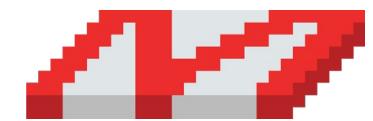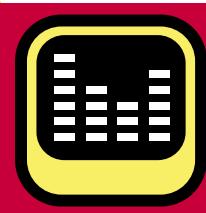
STATS: EMAIL MARKETING METRICS

Email marketing metrics are perhaps the most streamlined and standard of all digital marketing channels.

Here are the ones you should regularly keep an eye on:

List Size/Growth Rate

You can't do email marketing unless you have an email list.

In general, you should strive to get a constant stream of new subscribers added to your list every day/week/month.

The size of your list is usually a good proxy for the scale of success you can achieve with email marketing.

Whenever you see your list size or growth rate stagnate, you should check with the people in charge of acquisition channels (SEO, Digital Advertising, Social Media, etc.)
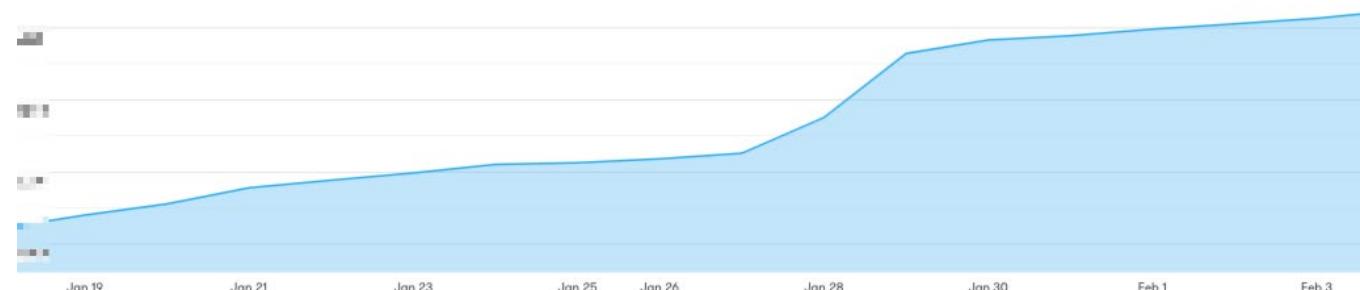
Open Rates

The open rate is simply the percentage of people who opened your email in relation to the number of people who received it.
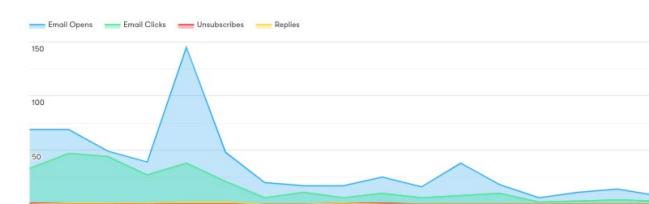
A good open rate is usually an indicator that your email had a good subject line and that it was sent at the right time.

What a "good" open rate is varies depending on your industry, the size of your list, and even the type of campaign.

We recommend you send a few campaigns (or check the historical data, if you have any) and use that as a baseline to improve.

Plus, you can check Mailchimp's Email Marketing Benchmarks to get an idea.
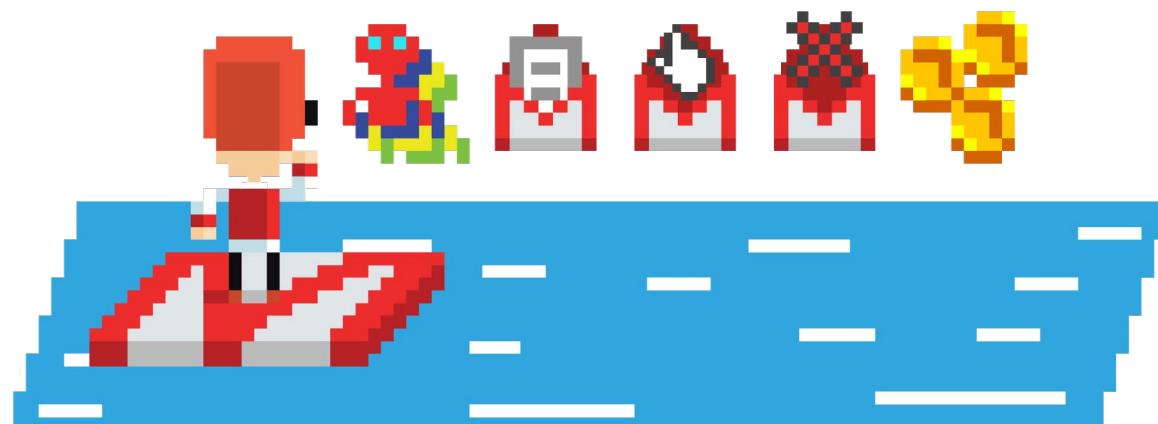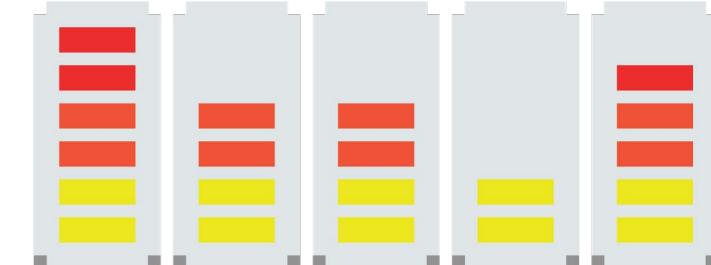
Click Rates

The click rate is calculated as the percentage of people who click on a link in the body of an email in relation to the number of people who received it.

Open rates are an indicator of how successful your body copy and call-to-action are in compelling the recipient to take action.

As with open rates, what a "good" open rate is will depend on a lot of factors.

You can use your previous campaigns as a baseline to improve, or check out Mailchimp's benchmarks.

Unsubscribe Rates

Unsubscribe rate is the percentage of people who hit the "Unsubscribe" link in your emails in relation to the number of people who received an email.

People who unsubscribe don't want to receive your emails anymore.
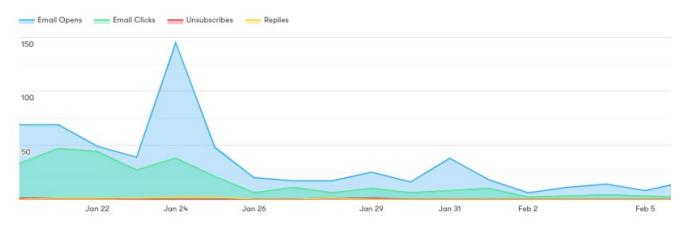
It's normal for a small percentage of people to unsubscribe, but a high unsubscribe rate means that the content you're sending is not relevant to its recipients.

You should aim for your unsubscribe rate to be a slow as possible—typically under 1%. (Check Mailchimp's benchmarks.)

Business Metrics

Let's talk business.

Business metrics will depend on the stage of the funnel each email is created for.

These metrics will determine if your emails are actually generating results for your business.

Here are a couple of examples:

- The success of an email designed to get subscribers to register for a webinar (middle-of-the-funnel) can be measured by the **number of registrants** from email traffic, or the **conversion rate** of email traffic into webinar registrants.

- The success of an email campaign for Black Friday sales can be measured by the **number of sales** or **revenue** generated by email traffic.
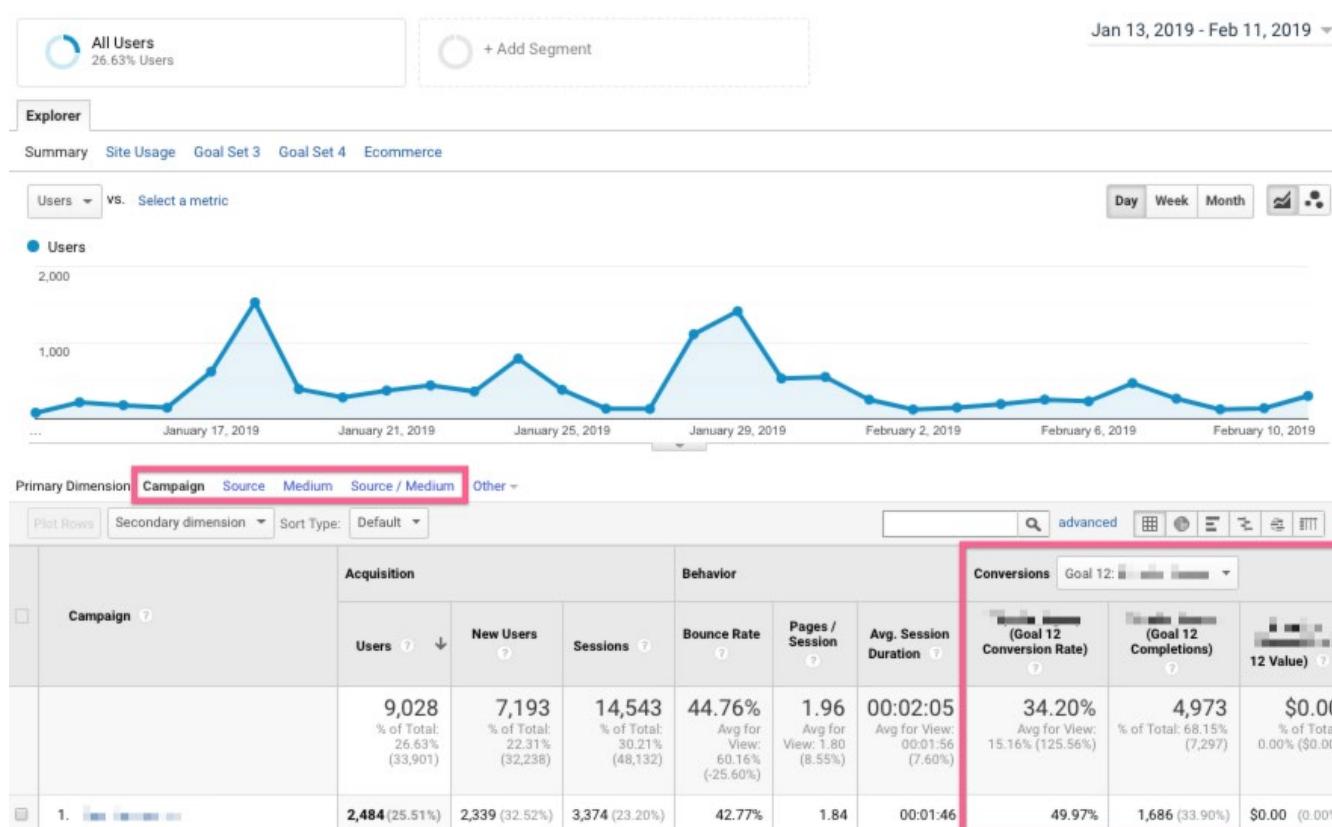
To determine the impact of your email traffic in these metrics, you can use UTM tracking parameters in the URLs you include in your emails—these will allow you to track the performance of your campaigns within Google Analytics.

Here are some resources to help you get started:

- Perfect UTM Tracking Codes For Google Analytics

- Check out the "Website Analytics Strategy" chapter of this guide to learn more about tracking your business metrics.

POWER-UPS: THE BEST EMAIL MARKETING TOOLS

Let's talk about using the right tools.

There are MANY email marketing tools out there.

With that said, there's really only a few that you need to use in order to have a powerful email marketing strategy in place.

Our ideal email marketing stack looks like this:
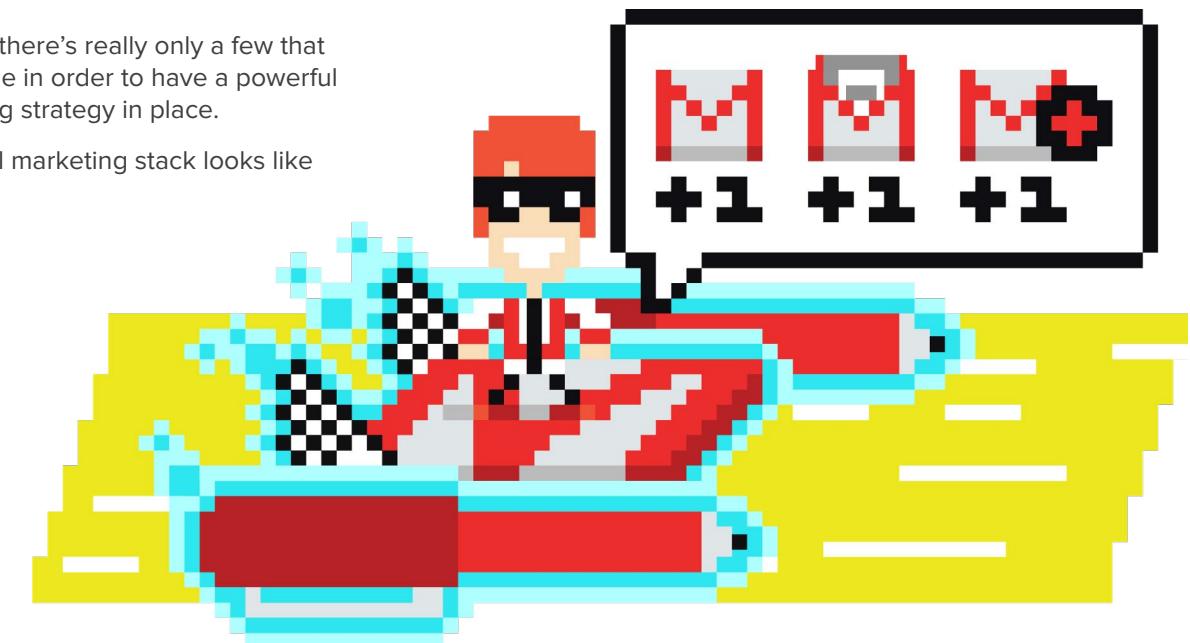
Email Service Providers

This is where you'll spend 99% of your time as an email marketer.

Today, most email service providers allow you to manage your subscribers, send unlimited emails, and set up automated processes.

These are our favorite ones (choose what works for you based on your experience and the size of the business):

- **Mailchimp:** This is one of the most popular email service providers in the world. It's a great way to get started in email marketing with a FREE plan that offers up to 2,000 subscribers, 12,000 emails sent per month, and email automation.
Check out Mailchimp

- **ConvertKit:** With ConvertKit, you'll be able to create more complex email automations than on Mailchimp—while still using a super user-friendly interface.
Check out ConvertKit

- **Drip:** This is our favorite email service provider. However, it's not for everyone—it's an advanced platform designed for companies with more advanced integration, tracking, and automation needs.
Check out Drip

✍️ Email Copywriting Tools

These tools will help you write better emails:

- **CoSchedule's Headline Analyzer:** Use this simple tool to compare different subject lines and improve them.
  Check out CoSchedule's Headline Analyzer

- **Hemingway Editor:** Use this tool to improve your email copy's readability and ease of understanding.
  Check out Hemingway Editor

- **Grammarly:** This powerful but simple tool uses AI to check your content for grammatical errors and offers suggestions to make your copy easier to understand.
  Check out Grammarly

- **Drip Scripts:** A free compilation of proven email templates you can easily fill out and customize to fit your own business.
  Check out Drip Scripts

👑 Deliverability & Compatibility Tools

These tools will help you make sure your emails reach your subscribers' inbox and that they can properly view them in any device.

You probably don't need any these if you're just starting out or you are sending emails to a list of fewer than 10,000-20,000 subscribers.

- **Litmus:** There's a lot you can do with this tool. Litmus is mostly known for its compatibility feature, which allows you to test and preview your emails in over 90 apps and devices to make sure they look great across the board.
  Check out Litmus

- **BriteVerify:** You can use this tool to check whether the email addresses in your email are valid or not. This allows you to remove fake or misspelled emails before you send your emails—which could hurt your deliverability otherwise.
  Check out BriteVerify

- **ReturnPath:** This platform provides you with important deliverability metrics like inbox placement (whether your emails are ending up in the spam folder) or sender reputation. You can track these to make sure your deliverability rates don't fall.
  Check out ReturnPath

HELPERS: GREAT EMAIL MARKETING PEOPLE AND BLOGS TO FOLLOW

There is a lot of content out there about email marketing.

Just like synchronized aerobic dancing, most of it is bad.

With that said, there are a handful of resources we know and love. If you're just getting started, here are a few people, communities, and blogs that we trust.

Brennan Dunn: Brennan is an expert at email marketing automation who likes to share advanced tactics he uses on his business.
Follow Brennan Dunn on Twitter
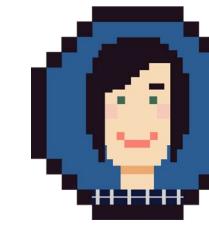
Joanna Wiebe: Joanna is the founder of Copy Hackers, a copywriting blog for marketers. On top of writing email copy for major brands, she has also published some of our favorite guides and tutorials on conversion-focused content.
Follow Joanna on Twitter

emailgeeks Slack Channel: A large community of people working on email marketing on all types of scales and in many industries. It's a great place to ask questions and discover great content on email marketing.
Check out emailgeeks
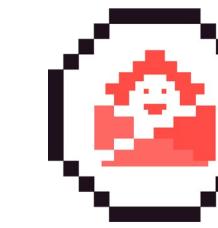
Really Good Emails: A website that compiles amazing email designs, classified by type of campaign—it's a great way to get inspiration for your own campaigns.
Check out Really Good Emails

Litmus Blog: We like to check the Litmus blog to keep up to date on the more technical aspects of email marketing, like changes in email client support or new trends in email design and development.
Check out the Litmus blog
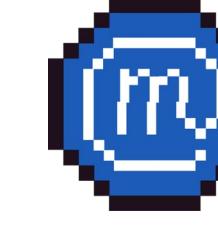
Mailcharts blog: A great resource for inspiration and ideas for marketing campaigns. You'll find everything from best practices for specific types of campaigns to the analysis of email campaigns by major companies.
Check out the Mailcharts blog

BECOMING A WORLD-CLASS EMAIL MARKETER IN RECORD TIME

The only way to get better at email marketing is to do email marketing.

When you're a beginner, you have three options to get hands-on experience:

- **Create and implement an email marketing strategy for your own business.** If you already have a business, you can simply use what you've learned to grow it.

- **Find a business who you can help with email marketing** and that will give you allow you to create and send campaigns to their subscribers or users (maybe this is a business you already work for, a friend's company, or a small business in the place where you live). This is the path we recommend since you will already have a list of people to email from the get-go.

- **Start your own website/business and build an email list from scratch.** This will make things a bit harder because you won't have anyone to email for a while—but if you do go this way, you'll have a lot of freedom to try different campaigns and experiments.

Once you have this figured out, use the following framework to get started:

1. Finish reading this guide, of course.

   Outcome: You should have the fundamental knowledge of email marketing to launch highly profitable campaigns.

2. Audit the performance of previous email campaigns.

   Outcome: You will be able to determine the type of content that works and doesn't work for a specific audience, which you can replicate for your future campaigns.

3. Audit the subscriber data being gathered.

   Outcome: You will know what kind of segmentation to use and what kind of data you have available to personalize the content of your emails.

4. Create one email campaign for each campaign type (onboarding, engagement, win-back, and sunset). If the business already has some email campaigns live, you can try to edit or repurpose some of those.

   Outcome: You'll have deployed a comprehensive email nurturing plan that covers the entire lifecycle of the user.

5. Track the performance of your campaigns. Use the metrics provided by your email service provider to track email performance (open, click, and unsubscribe rate) and Google Analytics to track business performance.

   Outcome: You'll have visibility of what works, what doesn't, and a solid baseline to keep improving your campaigns.

TRAPS: AVOID THESE EMAIL MARKETING TRAPS

There are a few mistakes we keep seeing beginners make again and again when going into email marketing.

These can make you lose a lot of time you could spend doing work that actually matters.

Here are the most common ones (so you can avoid them):

Focusing Too Much on Email List Size

With a little bit of reading, you'll find that many blog posts cover the topic of "massively growing an email list."

Even though you should try to consistently grow your email list and it can be easier to get big results if you have a big list, it's **not something you should pursue at the expense of a solid email marketing strategy**.

Time and time again, we've found that a small list of highly engaged subscribers is much more profitable than a massive list of inactive people.

If you already have a list of subscribers of a decent size (even just a few hundred), it's better to spend your time creating great campaigns for them than to focus exclusively on growing your list.

Buying Or Scraping Lists of Emails

This is just a waste of time and money.

If you email people who did not opt-in to receive emails from you, they will mark your emails as spam.

This can end up drastically hurting your deliverability rates in a way that can be hard to recuperate from.

Don't try to cut corners here—it won't work in the short term and it will suck in the long term.

Not Using Mobile-Friendly Templates

This should be obvious by now, but we've seen major companies send emails that are impossible to read on mobile devices.

Over 50% of subscribers open emails using a mobile device.

Beginners usually mess this up when they try using a fancy, untested HTML template. Just stick to the templates provided by your email service provider or test how your templates render in the most important email clients (using a service like Litmus).

Focusing Too Much on Tools

This is very common when it comes to picking an email service provider.

The trick is to not let yourself be tempted by the fear of missing out on a fancy, complicated feature or tool.

When you're getting started, you can probably achieve everything you need to with any of the major email service providers.

Just pick the one that fits your budget (or the one already being used by the company) and get to work.

As you get more experience, you'll outgrow certain tools—it's not a problem, you can always migrate to a new, more powerful one (we've done it 4 or 5 times in 7 years).

6 THE DIGITAL ADVERTISING STRATEGY GUIDE

The ultimate tutorial **on how to create massively profitable digital advertising campaigns.**

WORLD MAP: WHAT IS DIGITAL ADVERTISING?
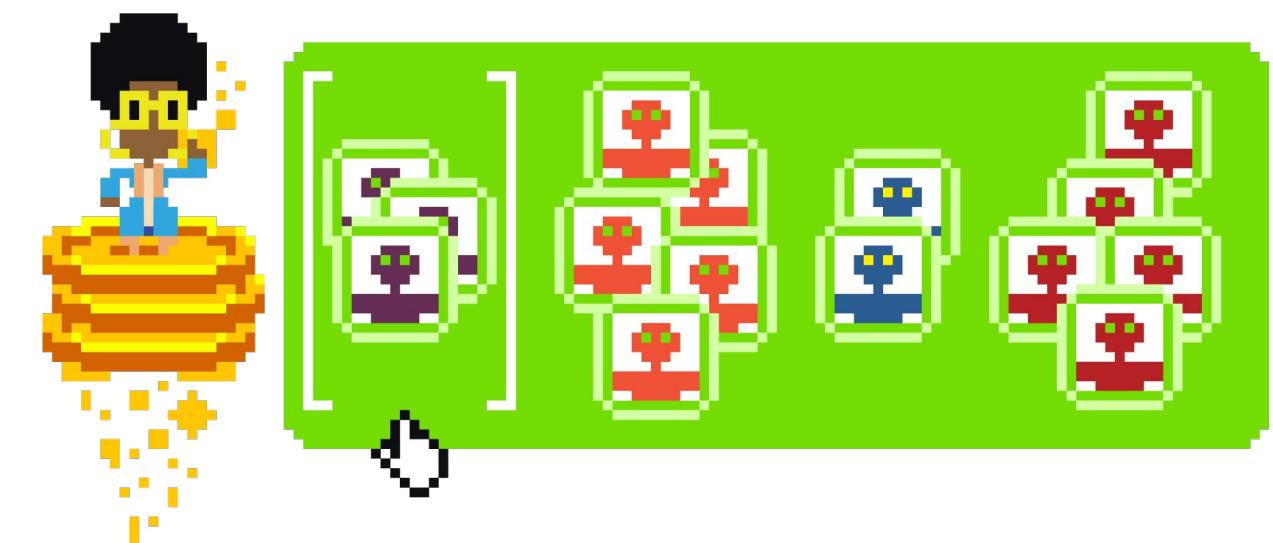
Let's talk about old-school advertising.

Back in the day, in the traditional world of advertising, large companies would spend their marketing budget on stuff like billboards, TV and radio ads, magazines or sponsorships.

If you didn't have that kind of money, you were stuck with ads in local newspapers or specialized magazines. Or simply word-of-mouth.

Today, you can see stuff like this:

The playing field has leveled.

And it's better for everyone:

- Small companies can reach their target audience and have their message right next to those of massive corporations—even with a limited budget.

- Large companies can be smarter about their ad spend and reach precisely the people they want to reach.

Small, Independent Brand
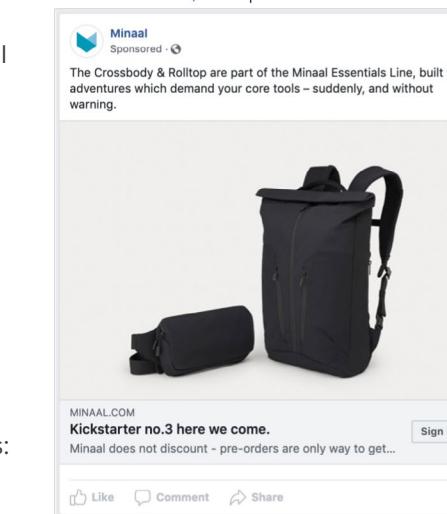
Massive Global Brand
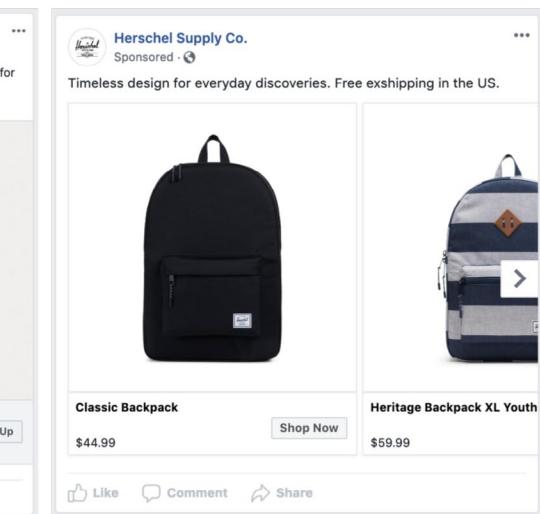
This is possible because the advertising model has changed from being *reach-based to pay-per-click-based (or PPC-based).*

In the traditional, reach-based model, advertisers paid to place ads that would be seen by a relatively large group of people, a fraction of which was part of their target audience—that was their campaign's reach.

People who
see the ad

Not the
target
audience

Target
audience

Advertisers
pay for
everything

Here's how that works:

Let's say a manufacturer of high-end women's shoes placed an ad in a newspaper that's read by an estimated 10,000 people per day.

The newspaper would tell the manufacturer that about 20% of the people who read that newspaper were women who earned enough money to be able to afford the shoes being advertised.

That particular ad would reach 2,500 people somewhat within its intended target audience (with no idea whether or not they are actually interested in high-end shoes at the moment).

The newspaper, however, would usually charge for ad placements based on the total of 10,000 people.

Of course, this is an extreme and simplified example, but you can already tell how inefficient this model is.

Especially if you compare it with how the PPC model works.

In the PPC model, advertisers choose to show their ads to only a segment of people mostly belonging to their target audience and pay only for how many of those people click on their ads.

People who
see the ad

Not the target audience

Target
audience

People
who click
on the ad

Advertisers
pay for this
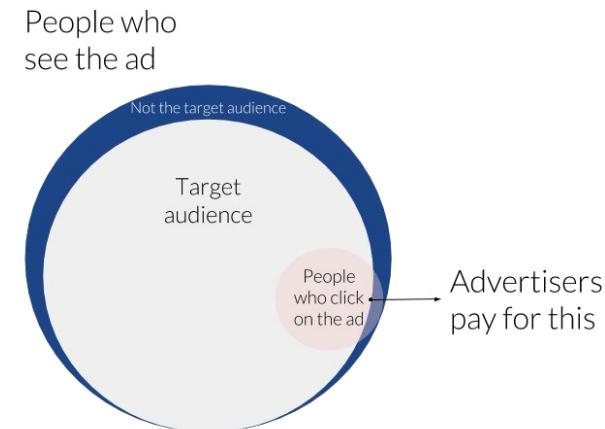
Here's how it works:

Let's say that same high-end shoe manufacturer wants to place some search ads using Google Ads.

They could show their ad to people searching for "designer shoes" on Google.

If the ad was seen by 100,000 people and 2.5% of those people click on the ad, that's 2,500 people within their target audience.

In this case, the shoe manufacturer would only pay for those 2,500 clicks from people who are very likely to be part of their target audience—people interested in designer shoes.

That's the power of digital advertising.

Simply put, digital advertising is using digital platforms to attract people within your target audience at a lower cost than the revenue generated by that same people.

STRATEGY: HOW TO LAUNCH HIGHLY PROFITABLE DIGITAL ADVERTISING CAMPAIGNS

I've got bad news for you.

There's really only one way to become good at digital advertising.

And that's to do it yourself. To run campaigns on your own. To mess up. And to learn from your mistakes.

Sorry! You can't sloth around on this one.

Like with any digital marketing channel, experience trumps theory.

The challenge is that, to get experience, you need money to spend on campaigns—but companies with the budget for paid campaigns, want people with experience to run them.

This is something that I know all too well.

Mistakes can be **expensive.**

I once spent $22,362 of my clients' money in just 18 hours because of a small mistake that got out of control.

(But that's a story for another time.)

The thing is, digital advertising is about trial and error.

No way around that.

Even the most experienced digital advertisers will usually lose some money on their first try and adjust until they get to profitability.

The difference between someone with and without experience is how quickly they can make their campaigns profitable.

Beginners usually get discouraged or panic before they get to that point (and make mistakes like the one I did.)

If you're a beginner, the best thing you can do is to start small and follow a **repeatable, proven framework** to launch profitable campaigns.

- Understand the advertising platforms
- Plan campaigns for each stage of the funnel
- Target the right audiences for each campaign
- Create high-converting ads
- Estimating a budget for your campaigns

Let's go over that next:
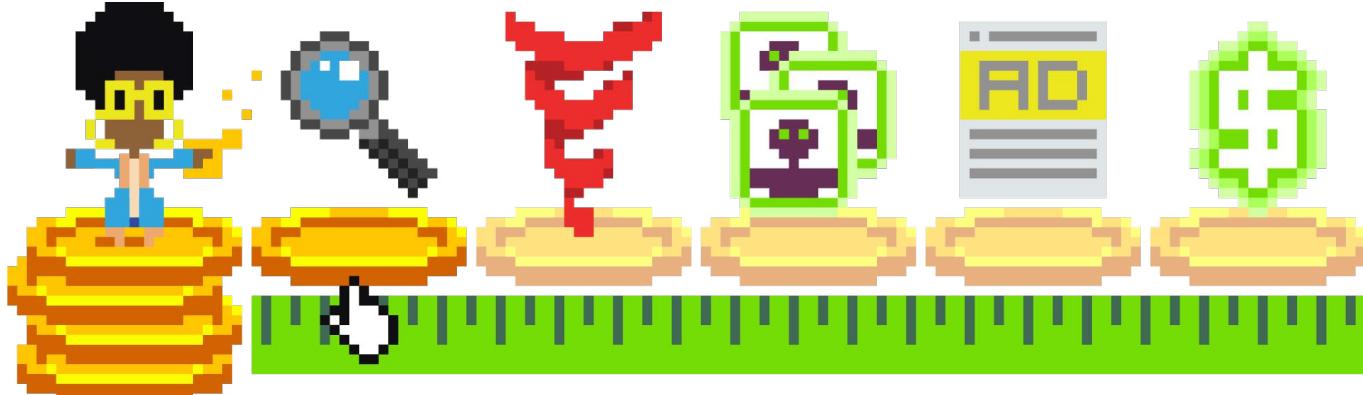
Understand the Main Digital Advertising Platforms

While you can place ads on Twitter, LinkedIn, Quora, Snapchat, Amazon, Tinder, and a ton of other platforms...

...most digital advertisers focus on just two: Google and Facebook.

That's why they accumulate 58% of the total digital ad market.

There are good reasons for that:

1. They have the largest audiences

2. They offer the best targeting capabilities

3. They've developed the most robust features for advertisers within their platforms

However, they work in ways that are fundamentally different from one another.

Google is Intent-Focused

Google offers advertisers many different ways to target and display their advertising, but its main one is still search ads.

Those are the ones that appear on the top of the search results.

In this case, advertisers "bid" on certain keywords (a.k.a. the phrases people search for) to show their ads on the search results.

This a very simple but powerful concept.

People who search for a certain term are *interested* in that term at that specific moment in time.

This presents you, the advertiser, with the perfect opportunity to put your product or message in front of those people.

Think of how different that is from TV advertising, where you get interrupted by an ad during pauses of your favorite show.

Traditional ads use interruptions, while search ads use *intent*.

project management tool

All   Images   News   Books   Videos   More   Settings   Tools

About 1,580,000,000 results (0.45 seconds)

Project Management Tool | Plan, budget, execute, report | zoho.com
Ad www.zoho.com/ ▾
Discussions, tasks, files, schedules and chat in one place. Sign up for free! Work Better Together.
Features · Easy task management · Pricing And Plans · Set your own workflows

Project Management Tool - Smartsheet.com
Ad www.smartsheet.com/PM_Tools ▾
Smartsheet is #1 **Project Tool**. Simple. Web-Based. Try it Free! Make Collaboration Work. Enterprise Ready. 100% Cloud-Based. Highlights: **Manage** Any **Project** Your Way, Pre-Built Templates Available.

Your Projects, Your Way | Easy As A Spreadsheet | airtable.com
Ad www.airtable.com/ ▾
Spreadsheet, calendar and form views. Beautiful collaboration and mobile access. Free to Sign Up. Templates · Content Pipeline Calendar · Film & Video Production · Product Management · For Teams

Simple Project Management Tool | monday.com (Recommended)
Ad www.monday.com/Project/Management ▾
Easy To Use - Try It Free! The #1 way to **manage** your Projects & Team. Simple & Color Coded. Free Trial Offer. Free iOS & Android Apps. SMB. Enterprise. Startup. 24/7 Legendary Support.

42 Best Project Management Software and Tools (Updated in 2019 ...
https://www.scoro.com/blog/best-project-management-software-list/ ▾
Feb 7, 2017 - Looking for the best project management software? Here's a list of 42 best **project management tools**. Find the right one now!

Facebook is Interest-Focused

Facebook, on the other hand, uses a different approach.

They have gathered tons of data on each of their users: what they like, who they know, where they've been, what they are interested in, and even what they do in websites other than Facebook.

They may not know what you're looking for **now.** But they can triangulate your demographic and psychographic data, and make a good guess about what you might be interested in...

... yeah, let's be honest. It's a little creepy. But it's insanely powerful as an advertiser. Facebook uses that data to show highly relevant ads to its users.

This is also drastically different from traditional ads.

With TV ads, you launch ads to a massive audience hoping a portion of them might be interested in your product.

With Facebook Ads, you are carefully choosing to show your ads to people who, based on a ton of data, are very likely to be interested in your product.

That's why Facebook ads are based on interests.

Now, I'll teach you how to use Google Ads and Facebook Ads strategically to generate results for your business.

👍 Like   💬 Comment   ↪ Share

Write a comment...   😊 📷 GIF 🏷

WP Engine
Sponsored · 🌐

Migrate your site to WP Engine's WordPress Digital Experience Platform and get 20% off.

Still looking to win online, every time?

SEE OUR PLANS

WPENGINE.COM
Launch your website now and get 20% off.   Learn More
Plans starting at $35, risk free. Get two months off wit...

👍 1

👍 Like   💬 Comment   ↪ Share

A mistake I made when I was starting with digital advertising was thinking I could just create an ad pointing to a sales page and expecting that to generate sales.

I've seen a lot of people make the same mistake.

If you do this, you'll miss 90% of the potential growth that lies within digital advertising.

A better method is to structure your digital advertising strategy in a way that it **boosts your entire funnel.**
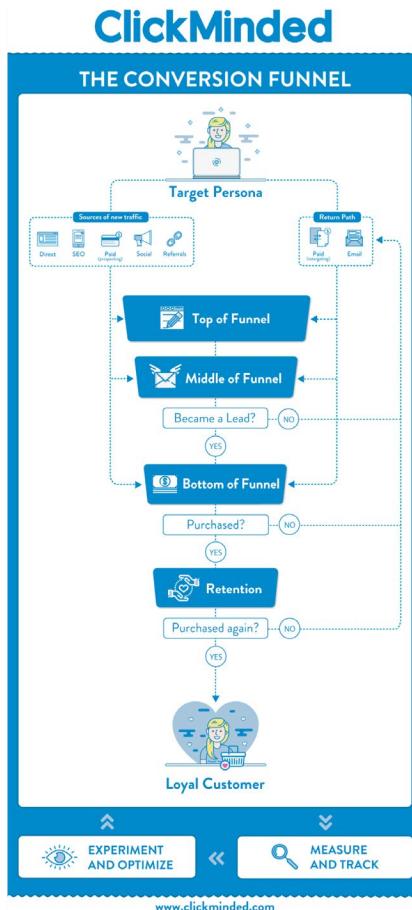
(To learn more about sales funnels, read the "**Sales Funnels Strategy**" chapter of this guide.)

Your job as a digital advertiser will be to design campaigns to hit the goals for each stage of the funnel:

- **Top-of-the-funnel:** Attract targeted traffic
- **Middle-of-the-funnel:** Get more leads
- **Bottom-of-the-funnel:** Generate sales
- **Monetization, retention, and love:** Increase customer lifetime value, reduce churn, get referrals

By launching campaigns that have these simple and clear goals, you can easily optimize things like your targeting, messaging, budget spend, and even the platforms you use for each stage of the funnel.

Let's dig into each of these:

Top-of-the-Funnel Campaigns

These are campaigns aimed at attracting relevant traffic to your top-of-funnel assets.

This is your digital equivalent of a "billboard on the side of the highway."

For example, this could mean driving traffic to a blog post, a YouTube video, a Podcast, or even a social media post.

With these campaigns you just want to create awareness for your company by sharing a helpful, interesting, or entertaining piece of content.

To know if these campaigns are profitable, you'll need to do some math.

Here's a simple example:

Let's say you're driving traffic to a blog post.

- You know about 10% of the people who land on the blog post end up becoming leads
- Around 5% of those leads become paying customers
- The average customer spends about $45 per purchase

Using that, you can estimate how much each blog post visitor is worth to you.

$45 * 5% * 10% = $0.225

If you were the one running the campaigns for this example, you should aim to pay less than 22 cents per click (known as cost per click or CPC) on your ad—anything below that will be a profitable top-of-funnel campaign.

Middle-of-the-Funnel Campaigns

These campaigns are designed to acquire leads—this means finding a way to contact your users. In digital marketing, this usually means getting people to give you their email address, but it can vary based on your business.

For example, middle-of-the-funnel campaigns can drive traffic to lead magnets, mini-courses, free trials, demos, low-priced products (a.k.a. tripwires), or giveaways.
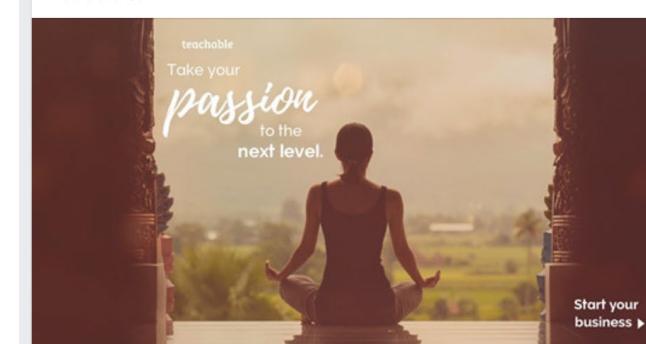
For these campaigns, you're actually tracking an action beyond just clicking on the ad and going to a page: You want people to become leads.

In this case, you'll typically be optimizing your cost per lead (CPL).

The math is similar to the one we already did:

- If you know around 25% of the leads you capture end up becoming paying customers
- And the average customer spends about $25 on your site

Your maximum CPL will be: **$25 * 25% = $6.25.**

If you were running this campaign, you should keep your CPL below $6.25 to stay profitable.

Bottom-of-the-Funnel Campaigns

Bottom-of-the-funnel campaigns are designed to generate sales for the business. Full stop.

For example, you could run a campaign for a flash sale, holiday sale, or just remind people that they left something in their shopping cart.

For these campaigns, you'll be optimizing your *customer acquisition cost (CAC).*

This is more straightforward than previous campaigns.

If your customers spend an average of $45 per purchase, then you need to spend less than that to be profitable.
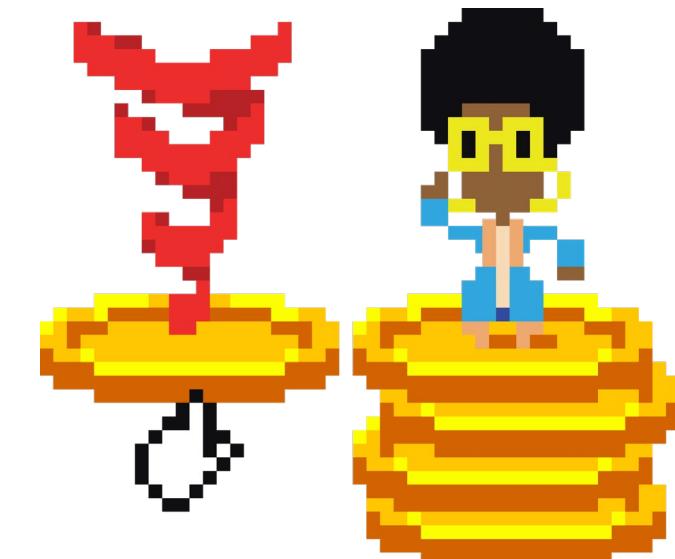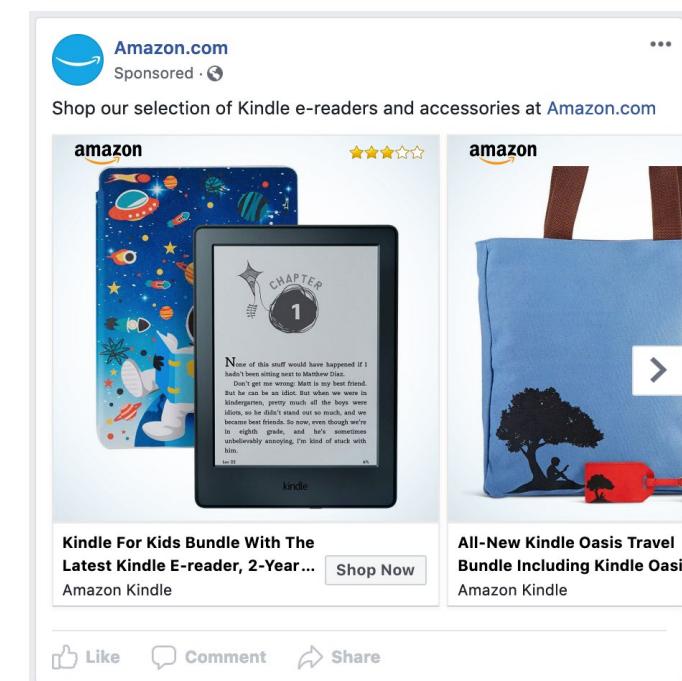
Monetization, Retention, and Love

This stage of the funnel is all about increasing your customers' lifetime value, reducing churn, and getting your customers to refer their friends.

Some of the campaigns you could run include upsell/cross-sell offers, loyalty programs, or referral programs.

For these types of campaigns you'll have to determine a valuable action (e.g. repeat purchase, referral, etc.) and optimize for that.

For example, if you know that a customer who joins a loyalty program spends an average of $100 more on your business, you'll know what the max you can pay for this conversion is.

As long as you stay below that number, your campaign will be profitable.

Depending on the goal of your campaigns, Google Ads and Facebook Ads provide a wide variety of goals and objectives to choose from. Check out these resources to learn more about those:

- Google Ads Goals
- Facebook Campaign Objectives
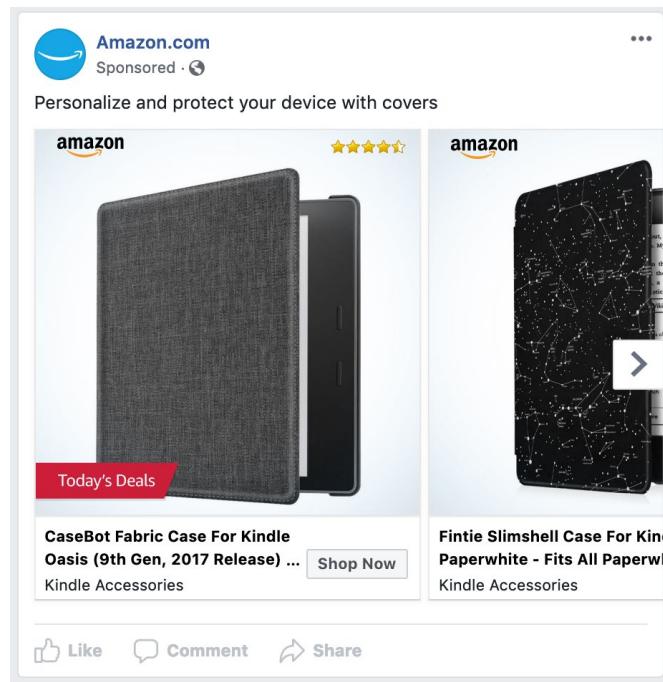
Next, let's go over the different methods to get your campaigns in front of your audience.

AD Campaign Targeting

Targeting is perhaps the most important step in launching an advertising campaign— even more so than creating your ads.

The only way you'll see results from your campaigns is to put it in front of the right people.

Once you've mapped campaigns for each stage of the funnel, it's time to work on targeting.

At a super high level, you can target your campaigns in two ways:

- **Prospecting:** This is the process of targeting brand new audiences for your campaigns— these are people who are not on your email list or have not been on your website.
- **Remarketing:** Is about targeting audiences who have already been in contact with your business—these could be people who have been on your site or previously joined your email list.

Each has its own strengths.

Prospecting allows you to reach people who would have otherwise never heard of you.

Remarketing is a great way to convert people who are already part of your funnel.

As a **general** rule, prospecting is a better fit for top- or middle-of-the-funnel campaigns, while remarketing works great for middle, bottom, and monetization stages of the funnel.

Like we already mentioned, targeting works differently on different platforms. Let's dig in a bit more.

Google Ads Targeting

In this case, we'll only go over targeting for search ads. (Google Ads also includes other formats like YouTube and Display Network.)

The basic way targeting works in Google Search is:

- You research which words or phrases (keywords) people use to look for information, products, or services related to your business— this is called keyword research.
- You pick a group of those keywords to target.

In general, to target your Google search ads, you'll use three layers:

1. Searcher intent
2. Keyword matching
3. Prospecting vs. retargeting

Let's go over each of these.

For example, let's say you run Google Search Ads for a flower delivery business and want to know what people are searching for that's related to "flower delivery."

By using Google's Keyword Planner, you'll find something like this:

Keyword (by relevance)	Vol	CPC
Your search term		
flower delivery ⭐	550 000	$5.79
Idea		
flowers ⭐	3 350 000	$5.11
send flowers ⭐	74 000	$5.32
funeral flowers ⭐	90 500	$2.51
florist ⭐	450 000	$2.96
flower shop ⭐	246 000	$2.36
order flowers ⭐	22 200	$5.74
mothers day flowers ⭐	60 500	$2.15
same day flower delivery ⭐	60 500	$6.48
birthday flowers ⭐	74 000	$1.73

Note: Unless you are already spending a certain amount of money on Google Ads, you'll see a range—e.g. 10K-100K—under search volume instead of the actual average value.

The first step is to classify these keywords by searcher intent.

To do this, you'll map those keywords against the stages of the funnel.

At the **top-of-the-funnel**, people are not necessarily aware of your business and might not even be looking into making a commercial transaction. They are usually just looking for general information about a topic.

At the **middle-of-the-funnel,** people already know what they want and are comparing the options available in the market.

At the **bottom-of-the-funnel,** people have made up their mind and are ready to make a purchase.

Finally, at the monetization, retention, and love stage of the funnel, people who are already customers will look to get information to continue their relationship with your business (e.g. their purchase status, purchasing again, or getting customer support).

For the flower delivery business and the set of keywords in the example above, that might look like:

- **Top-of-the-funnel:** Flowers, mother's day flowers, birthday flowers, funeral flowers
- **Middle-of-the-funnel:** Flower delivery
- **Bottom-of-the-funnel:** Flower shop, order flowers, send flowers, same day flower delivery
- **Monetization, retention, and love:** There aren't any keywords for this stage of the funnel above, but these could include keywords like "[name of business] gift cards" or "[name of business] order tracking".

To learn more about mapping your keywords to the stages of the funnel, check out this post:

- Stop Guessing, Start Converting: Here are the Keywords to Use for Awareness, Consideration, and Decision Stage Content

Next, you need to select your keyword matching type.

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Keyword matching allows you to decide how strict or loose you want Google Ads to be when deciding which searches to include your ads on.

Google Ads offers four match types that are best explained by this simple summary:

Match type	Special symbol	Example keyword	Ads may show on searches that contain:	Example searches
Broad match	none	women's hats	Misspellings, synonyms, related searches, and other relevant variations.	• buy ladies hats • women's clothing
Broad match modifier	+keyword	+women's +hats	All the terms designated with a + sign (or close variations of those terms) in any order. Additional words may appear before, after, or between the terms.	• women's scarves and hats • winter hats for women
Phrase match	"keyword"	"women's hats"	Matches of the phrase (or close variations of the phrase) with additional words before or after.	• blue women's hats • buy women's hats • women's hats on sale
Exact match	[keyword]	[women's hats]	Exact matches of the term or close variations of that exact term with the same meaning.	• women's hats • ladies hats • hats for women • hats women

With **broad match**, your ads will show on searches for keywords you didn't necessarily select (misspellings, related searches, etc.)

For example, if you target "mother's day flowers" with broad match, you might show up for searches for "mother's day gift baskets" even though you might not offer that product.

The trade-off in going with this is:

● Larger audience, which includes searches you might not have thought of

● Not as specific, so you might have to pay for clicks from people who don't belong to your target audience

On the other end of the spectrum, with **exact match,** your ads will only show when the exact keyword you selected or a close variation with the same meaning is searched for.

For example, if you target "mother's day flowers" with exact match, your ads will show for that query alone and not others like "best mother's day flowers".

The trade-off in going with this is:

● Significantly smaller audience, which might mean you'll miss some opportunities in keywords you didn't include in your plan

● It's very likely people who click on your ads will belong to your target audience

Broad match modified and **phrase match** are somewhere in between these two extremes.

I recommend you check out this post to learn how to select your keyword match type:

● PPC Keyword Match Types: The Ultimate Guide To Creating A Killer Strategy

Finally, you can choose whether to show your ads to people who have already been on your site (remarketing) or not (prospecting).

By doing this, you can narrow down even further and achieve things like only show certain campaigns to existing users or increase your bid for people who have visited your site (to try and get your ads to show higher on the page).

Check out this guide to learn more about retargeting for Google Search ads:

● Remarketing Lists for Search Ads (RLSA): What You Need to Know

Plus, install the Google Ads Global Site tag on your site, to easily set up remarketing audiences for Google Ads. To learn how to do that check out this tutorial:

● Easily Add the Adwords Remarketing Tag to Your Site

Facebook Ads Targeting

You can target your Facebook ads using three methods:

1. Core audiences

2. Custom audiences

3. Lookalike audiences

Each of those leverages all the data Facebook has gathered about their users in a different way.

With **core audiences,** you'll use Facebook's data to manually build a targeting profile for your ads.

This includes location, demographics, interests, behavior, or connections.

To learn more about how to use core audiences, check out this post:

● Core Audiences: How to Target Facebook Ads Using More Demographics

You'll typically use core audiences when you're just getting started and you don't have any user data recorded on the Facebook Pixel to use for remarketing or lookalike audiences. Instead, you can rely on Facebook's massive data sets to find audiences that match a certain profile.

If you're planning to use core audiences, you should have done some research on your ideal target customer and ideally built a customer persona.

(To learn how to create customer personas, check out our persona creation mini-course.)

With **custom audiences,** you can target subscribers you already know—a.k.a. run remarketing campaigns.

This includes people who have visited your website, people on your email list, or users of your mobile app.

This is a really powerful way to convert people who are already in different stages of your funnel.

For example, you could use custom audiences to launch a campaign that targets people who visited a checkout page but didn't complete their purchase (known as abandoned-cart campaigns).

To learn more about using custom audiences, check out this guide:

● Facebook Ads Guide: 55 Custom Audiences to Target People Ready to Act

If you want to run campaigns targeting website visitors, you'll also need to install the Facebook Pixel on your site. Check out this tutorial to learn how to do that:

● How to add the Facebook Pixel to your website in 6 minutes

Finally, **lookalike audiences** is a targeting method to that allows you to find people who are similar to your existing customers or users.

There's a joke in Silicon Valley that says that instead of working on self-driving cars or colonizing Mars, some of the *world's best engineers are working on Facebook's lookalike* audiences functionality.

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Instead of *picking* which attributes you believe match your ideal customers (like you would to create a core audience), with lookalike audiences you'll *give* Facebook a list or segment of actual customers, and their software will find a segment of similar people for you among all their users—based on hundreds or thousands of data points that would be impossible for a human to analyze.

For example, you could upload a list of emails containing your most valuable customers and create a *1% lookalike audience.*

Create a Lookalike Audience ✕

Find new people on Facebook who are similar to your existing audiences. Learn more.

Source ⓘ ClickMinded - Initiated checkout
Create New ▾

Location ⓘ
Countries > North America
United States

Search for countries or regions to target | Browse

Audience Size ⓘ
2.2M
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 % of countries

Resulting audiences
Lookalike (US, 1%) - ClickMinded - Initiated checkout

Estimated reach
2,150,000 people

Audience size ranges from 1% to 10% of the total population in the countries you choose, with 1% being those who most closely match your source.

Show Advanced Options ▾

Cancel | **Create Audience**

This means that Facebook will pick the 1% of people within a certain population who are the most like the segment you selected.

You can use lookalike audiences to launch powerful prospecting campaigns.

To learn how to create lookalike audiences with this tutorial:

● How to create a Facebook Lookalike Audience in 5 minutes

Once you created a target audience, it's time to create your ads.

AD ## Best Practices for Digital Ads

In the Mad Men era, you had to pay tens of hundreds of thousands of dollars to major advertising agencies to create great ads.

With digital advertising, anyone can launch world-class ad campaigns.

The main reason behind this is that digital ads have a lot more constraints than a traditional TV or magazine ad—everyone has to play within the same limitations.

By following a few best practices, you'll have a great baseline to improve upon.

Get Familiar with the Ad Formats

The first step in creating great ads is to understand how to use the real estate provided by the advertising platforms.

You should learn what the components of each type of ad are and use ALL of them when creating your ads.

Below you'll find the main components of both a Google Text ad and a Facebook Feed image ad:

Headline → dropbox.com - Dropbox™ Official Site - Get Started Now
[Ad] www.dropbox.com/ ▾ ← Display URL
Secure File Sharing and Storage. Try Dropbox Business for Free!
Description → Over 500 Million Users · Extended Version History · 30-Day Free Trial · Password-Protected Links
Leader - File Storage & Sharing – G2 Crowd

Sign In
Sign In to Your
Dropbox Account.

Business Pricing
Extended File Recovery, Priority
Support and More. Try Today! ← Ad extensions

Free 30-Day Trial
Try Dropbox for Business.
Start a Free Trial Today!

Try Dropbox Plus
Space for All Your Documents,
Files and Photos. Upgrade Today!

Google AD

Business page name + logo → Madewell 👍 Like Page
Sponsored · 🌐
Post copy → "The ultimate cool-girl shopping destination" —PopSugar

← Ad creative (i.e. image, video, slideshow)

Headline copy →
Description copy →
URL →
Shop Madewell® New Arrivals
More looks to wear (and love) every day are waiting. Shop now.
WWW.MADEWELL.COM Shop Now ← Call to Action (CTA) button

Facebook AD

Writing Conversion-Focused Copy

Writing conversion-focused copy is one of the most important optimizations you can make. You only have a small space to send your message, so you have to make every word count.

These are some tips to write copy that converts:

Use the second person and active voice. For example, write "Get 50% off your new designer shoes" instead of "50% off all designer shoes."

- Use numbers or data whenever possible. Several studies have found that numbers tend to increase the clickthrough rate.

- Include the keyword in the headline of the ads (especially for Google Search Ads).

- Write about the benefits of your product instead of its features.

- Include "power words" to evoke emotion or curiosity.

Have a Clear Call-to-Action

I was surprised how much difference a call-to-action makes in an ad campaign.

A lot of beginner advertisers are too vague when they create their first ads because they're afraid of coming off as too aggressive or salesy.

The single most powerful thing you can do in digital advertising to get people to do something is simply to *tell them to take that action.*
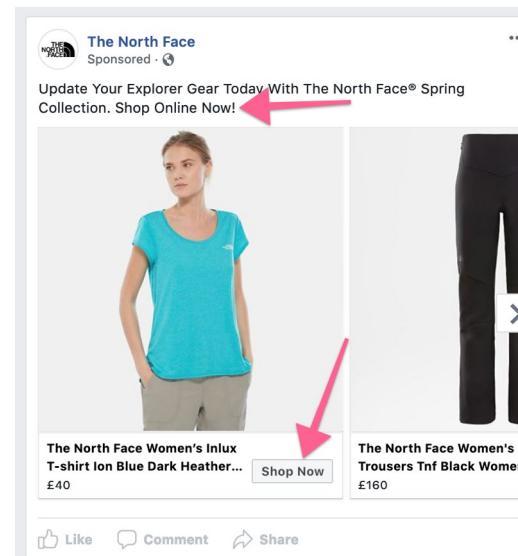
If the ad is designed to get people to buy, include a "buy now" call to action. If the objective is to get them to download a guide, include "download the guide" in your ads.
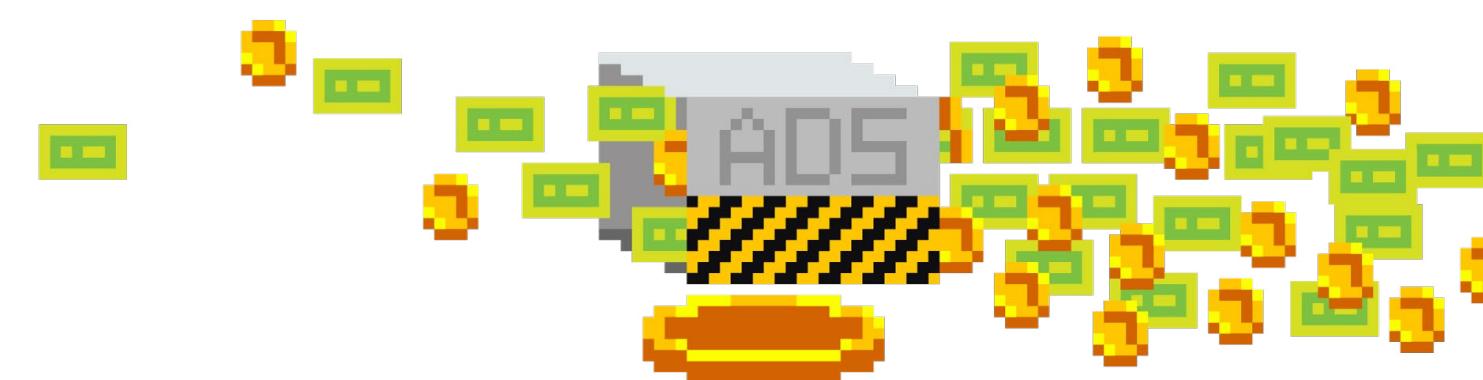
Include Eye-Catching Visuals

Some Facebook ad formats and placements allow you to include visuals in your ads—they call these "ad creatives."

The best practice here can vary depending on the industry.

In some cases, you'll want to have super high-quality photography—for example, if you belong to industries like travel, fashion, or food.

These images help highlight the quality of the product or inspire the audience.

However, in some industries it's better to include creatives that have a more homemade or authentic look—this seems to work for industries like info products or fitness.

The "real" aspect of these images help audiences relate to the message in the ads.
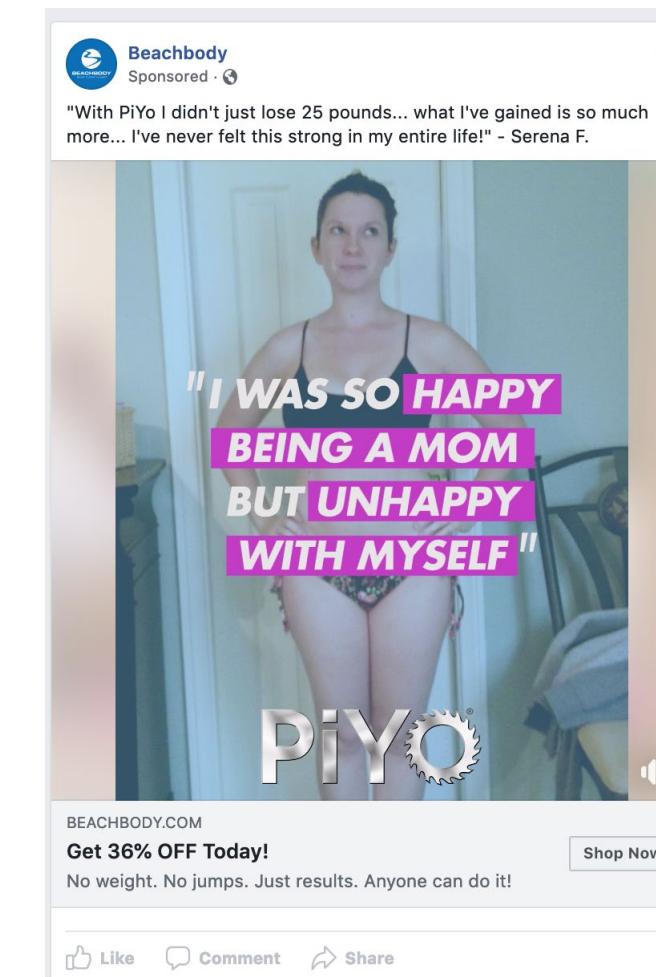
Regardless of the type of ad creative you choose, you should aim for it to be eye-catching enough to get someone to stop scrolling to check out your ad—cliché stock photos will just get ignored by most audiences.

Before you start working on your ad creatives, you should check out what your competitors are doing:

1. Go to their Facebook page

2. Click on "Info & Ads"

3. View all the ads they are currently running on Facebook Ads
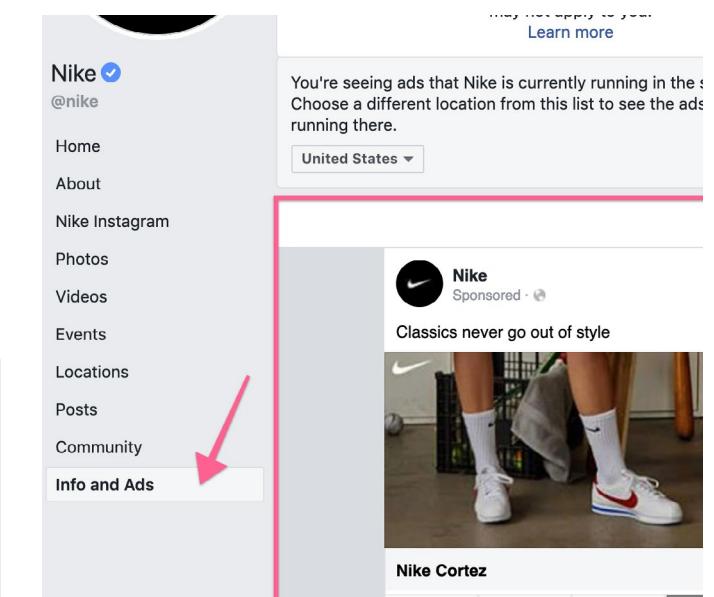
Make Sure Your Landing Pages Match Your Ads

Finally, it's important that the page your audience lands on after clicking on your ads (known as landing page), actually match what was promised on the ads.

If you create an ad targeting the keyword "men's leather jackets", don't send your people to a landing page for men's clothing—instead, take them to the specific section of your site dedicated to men's leather jackets.

If your landing pages don't match the intent of copy of the ad, you'll end up with a high bounce rate (percentage of people who close your page without performing any action on your site)—this can negatively affect the performance of your ads and even increase your cost-per-click.

To learn more about creating great Google Text Ads and Facebook Ads, check out these resources:

- How To Write The Best Google Ads Copy & Back It Up on Landing Pages

- Facebook Ad Examples That Actually Work (And Why)

You're almost ready to launch your campaigns. Now, let's go over:

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Estimating a Budget for Your Campaigns

If digital advertising worked the same way traditional ads work, there would be no place for the little guys.

Small companies would have no way to compete against massive companies and their multi-billion dollar budgets.

Fortunately, that's not how digital advertising works!

Digital advertising platforms use an auction model and have developed a way to level the playing field.

They did this by introducing quality and relevance into the auction.

The name of this metric varies depending on the platform but it's pretty much the same principle. For Google Ads, this is called Quality Score. For Facebook Ads, this is called Relevance Score.

In essence, it works like this:

1. Advertiser (you) picks how much you're willing to pay for each click on your ads

2. The advertising platform checks your bid, targeting, ad, and landing page

3. The advertising platform compares your information against that of other bidders

4. The advertising platform picks which ads to display based on the best combination of bid and relevance to the audience

5. The advertising platform checks performance of the ads and adjusts based on engagement metrics (e.g. clicks, CTR, bounce rate)

This means that you don't necessarily need to be the biggest bidder—if you create relevant and engaging ads, you can beat even the biggest companies in the world.

Here's how you can get started with budgeting for your campaigns:

The best way to do this is to work backward from the data you already have (or should have) from your business.

For example, let's assume you're trying to get sales of a $50 ebook which you're promoting through a webinar and you create a campaign to drive registrations to that webinar:

- If you know ~20% of the people who register for your webinar end up buying your ebook—you know that each registrant is worth ~$10 (**$50 * 20%**).

- If you know ~45% of the people who visit the landing page end up registering for the webinar—you know that your maximum cost per click is ~$0.45 (**$10 * 45%**).

- If you want to drive 1,000 registrations every month, your budget for this campaign should be ~$450/month (**$0.45 * 1000**).

You can use these initial estimations to launch your campaigns and adjust when your campaigns are actually live.

STATS: DIGITAL ADVERTISING METRICS

Let's talk numbers.

Digital advertising metrics are pretty standard across platforms and while some of them may have slightly different names or definitions, the core ones remain the same.

If you're a beginner advertiser, these are the most important ones you need to know right now:

CPC - CTR - QS - CPL
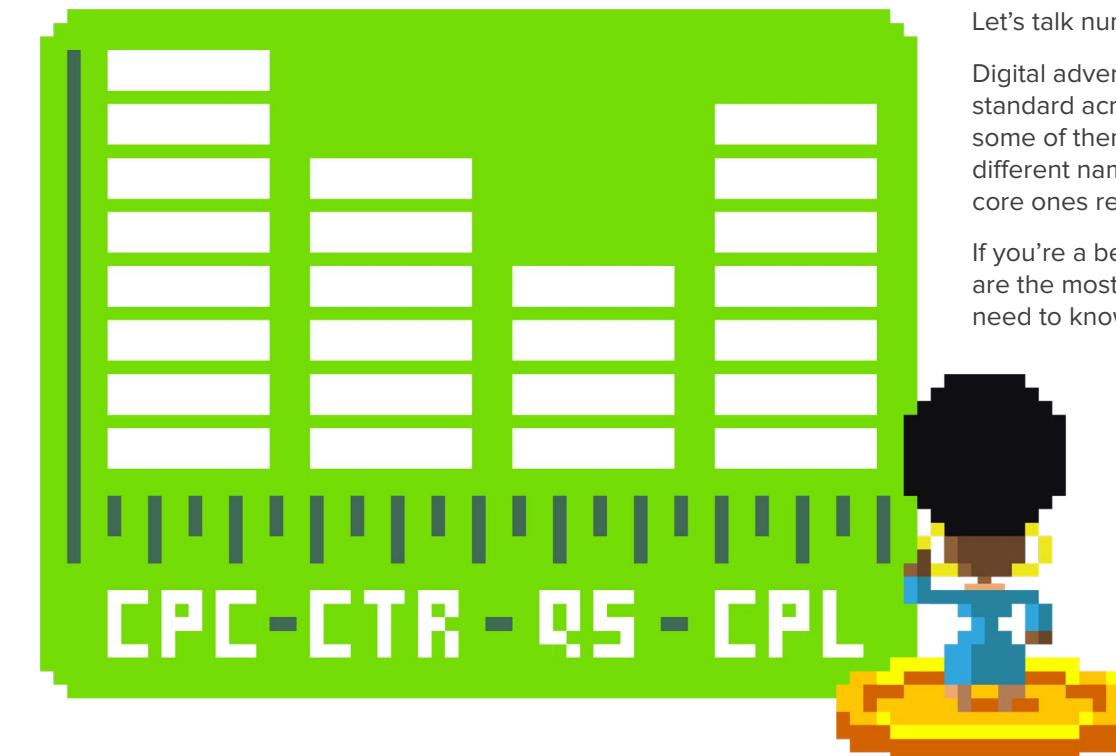
Cost-Per-Click (CPC)

Cost-per-click is the most fundamental digital advertising metric.

As it name suggests, it represents the amount to be paid by you, the advertiser, for each time an ad is clicked.

You can use the CPC value to estimate your campaign budgets or to determine whether your campaigns are profitable or not. Plus, you can analyze variations of your CPC to know whether there's something in your campaigns that requires optimization (or if a previous optimization worked).

Click-Through Rate (CTR)

Click-through rate is the the percentage of people who click on your ads relative to everyone who saw your them.

This is an indicator of the relevance of your ads:

- A high click-through rate means your audience is engaging with your campaign

- A low click-through might mean that you need to adjust your targeting or messaging

If you are testing different variations of an ad, you can use CTR to determine which is the one that performs the best at generating clicks.

AD Quality Score (QS) / Relevance Score

Google and Facebook's business models depend on them showing only the most relevant content to their users—it's their competitive advantage.

The reason why ads haven't (completely) ruined the Google and Facebook user experience is because both companies have implemented rules and guidelines that force advertisers to present relevant content to their users.

Google created the Quality Score (QS) and Facebook created the Relevance Score.

No one outside of Google and Facebook know exactly how these metrics are calculated, but the principles are essentially the same:

- The relevance of the ad copy is important to the score. Highly relevant content will translate to a higher score.

- The engagement of users with the ad is important to the score. High engagement with the ad will translate to a higher score.

- The engagement of the users with the landing page is important to the score. High engagement with the landing page will translate to a higher score.

Advertising platforms use these scores to determine how often your ads are shown, how many people receive them, and even how much you'll pay for each click.

$ Cost Per Lead (CPL) / Cost Per Acquired Customer (CAC)

As you already figured out, digital advertising is a game of profitability.

You need to acquire traffic, leads, and customers at a lower cost than the revenue you get from them.

As long as you can do that, you can increase your ad spend to scale your profits.

That's why cost is such an important metric for digital advertising.

Aside from CPC, the two most important cost-related metrics are cost per lead (CPL) and cost per acquired customer (CAC)

As the name suggests, CPL is the average amount an advertiser needs to spend to get a single lead.

CAC, on the other hand, is the average amount an advertiser needs to spend to get a single customer.

You can use these metrics to make calculations of profitability or budget.

POWER-UPS: THE BEST DIGITAL ADVERTISING TOOLS

There are many digital advertising tools that promise to take the load off setting up, optimizing, or tracking performance of your ads.

Our best advice for you, as a beginner, is to ignore most of these tools and just stick to the basics.

This is our recommended digital advertising stack for you:

Digital Advertising Platforms

You need to get familiar with the platforms you'll use to run your campaigns.

Each of these is massive and has a lot of features to play with, but don't feel overwhelmed—you don't need to master everything at once.

Just stick to the basic features and you'll be fine. As you get better, you'll start getting familiar and taking advantage of more advanced stuff.

- **Google Ads:** With Google Ads, you can launch search ads (what's covered in this guide) and display ads. If this is your first time setting up an account, be sure to **skip the guided setup, and don't opt in to AdWords Express!** Check out Google Ads

Welcome to Google Ads!

We'll help you sign up and start advertising in just a few steps. Experienced with Google Ads? Skip the guided setup.

- **Facebook Ads:** This is where you'll launch all of your Facebook and Instagram campaigns. If this is your first time using Facebook ads, we recommend you start by creating a Business Manager account first and an ad account second. (It will make things way easier down the line!) Check out Facebook Business Manager / Check out Facebook Ads

Tracking and Analytics

Advertising platforms offer solid analytics features that allow you to optimize your campaigns.

However, the challenge is to link clicks on an ad to behavior on your site or business results (e.g. revenue).

That's where these tools come in:

- **Google Analytics:** The most popular web analytics tool in the world. You'll be able to use Google Analytics to keep track of your paid campaign traffic and analyze how those visitors behave on your site (among many other things). Check out Google Analytics

- **Google Tag Manager:** This is an essential tool for a digital advertiser. You can use Google Tag Manager to easily deploy tracking codes (i.e. the Facebook Pixel and the Google Ads Global Site Tag) and set up conversion tracking on your site without the need to edit code. Check out Google Tag Manager

Landing Page Tools

If you need the flexibility to easily create custom landing pages that are optimized for your paid campaigns, a landing page editor can help.

- **Instapage:** Highly-customizable landing page builder with extensive integrations system, a publishing platform, analytics and optimization. Good for A/B testing and creating high converting landing pages. Check out Instapage

Copywriting and Design Tools

Creating assets for dozens of ads can be hard. These tools will make it much easier:

- **Canva:** If you're not a designer, Canva can help you quickly put together beautiful design assets for your ads. Their library of templates makes it easy not to mess up if you, like me, lack an eye for design.
Check out Canva

- **CoSchedule's Headline Analyzer:** A simple tool that analyzes the strength of your headlines based on data about what generates clicks, engagement, and shares. You'll get a simple score so that you can compare different variations of a headline.
Check out CoSchedule's Headline Analyzer

HELPERS: GREAT DIGITAL ADVERTISING PEOPLE AND BLOGS TO FOLLOW

Digital advertising has, unfortunately, a number of shady people, questionable tools and "get-rich-quick" products and schemes.

Plus, advertising platforms are constantly changing, adding, and removing features—it's hard to keep up.

These are our favorite people and blogs to help you make sense of it all:

Jon Loomer: Jon is our preferred source for all things related to Facebook ads. He regularly publishes helpful Facebook ads tutorials and blog posts explaining important changes to the platform.
Follow Jon on Twitter

Google Ads blog: This is the official blog for Google Ads. You can follow it for the latest news about the platform.
Check out the Google Ads blog
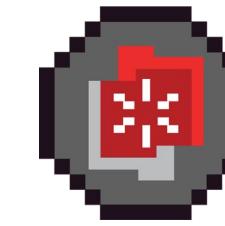
Hanapin marketing resources: This PPC-focused agency has a great library of case studies, guides, and reports. It's a great source of information if you want to avoid being bombarded with new blog posts every week.
Check out Hanapin marketing's resources
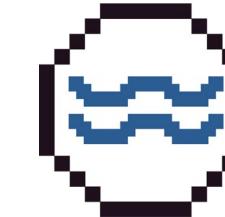
Wordstream blog: One of the biggest PPC blogs out there. They regularly publish new tutorials and helpful tips for both Google Ads and Facebook Ads.
Check out the Wordstream blog

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BECOMING A WORLD-CLASS DIGITAL ADVERTISER IN RECORD TIME

Practice is the best way to learn digital advertising quickly.

There are a couple of ways to get hands-on experience when you're just getting started:

- **Create a digital advertising strategy for your own business.** If you already have a business, you can simply use what you've learned to grow it.

- **Find a business who you can help with digital advertising** and that will give you some budget to launch campaigns (maybe this is a business you already work for, a friend's company, or a small business in the place where you live).

- If you can't find an existing business to help, you can also **start your own website and launch campaigns for that business** with your own money. If you go this way, it's important is that you have an actual business goal (leads, sales, revenue, etc.)—don't just launch campaigns for traffic.

Once you have this figured out, use the following framework to get started:

1. Finish reading this guide, of course.

   Outcome: You will understand how digital advertising fundamentally works—plus, the final section of this guide will help you avoid some common pitfalls for beginner advertisers.

2. Install tracking codes on your website (if they haven't been installed yet). You can use this guide for the Facebook Pixel and this one for the Google Ads Global Site Tag.

   Outcome: You will be able to start building remarketing lists and set up conversion tracking on your site.

3. Define a goal for your first campaign. Just do one campaign and go for a clear goal like leads, webinar registrations, free trial signups, quotes requested, or sales.

   Outcome: With a single goal in mind, it's important to focus relentlessly and do everything you can to reach profitability.

4. Select an audience to target. If you can, start with a remarketing audience (from a tracking pixel or email list), which will increase your chances of success.

   Outcome: Once you've identified the audience, it will be easier to craft messaging for them. A narrow audience also helps you stay in control of your budget.

5. Spy on competitors' Facebook Ads. Even if you're not running Facebook Ads, look up some of your competitors' ads to learn what kind of messaging they are using on their ads (remember, you can do this by going to their Facebook page and clicking on the "Info and Ads" section).

   Outcome: You will get clues for the kind of messaging that work for your competitors, which you can use to craft your own ads.

6. Create 2 ad variations. Don't create more than 2 at first, since it will take longer to know for sure which is the winning variation. Also, remember to only change one variable (e.g. title, image, call-to-action) at a time.

   Outcome: You'll have a baseline of performance to beat and start building knowledge of what does and doesn't work.

7. Launch your campaigns, check performance daily, figure out what worked, what didn't, and how to improve moving forward.

   Outcome: Running paid campaigns is an iterative process of launching and optimizing. This is what you will do most of the time as a digital advertiser.

TRAPS: AVOID THESE DIGITAL ADVERTISING TRAPS

If you're just getting started, it's pretty normal to get owned.

But, when running digital ads, some mistakes can cost you a lot of money or have long-term implications.

We made a quick guide so you can avoid these like a boss.

Violating Advertising Policies

Ever since the Cambridge Analytica scandal, advertising platforms have tightened their rules and policies for advertisers.

What you need to know before diving into these, is that they are intentionally vague to allow platforms to make judgement calls about what is and isn't allowed.

Still, you should familiarize yourself with them and definitely try not to do anything that goes against them (this could end up with your ad accounts being permanently banned).

- Click here to check Google Ads Policies

- Click here to check Facebook Ads Policies

Getting too Cute with Ad Formats

Each advertising platform offers several ad formats that we didn't include in this guide.

That was intentional.

It's easy to get excited about creating a cool looking ad format thinking that it will be drastically more successful than a basic ad format (text or image + text).

More often than not, this isn't the case.

When you're getting started it's better to just stick to a simple ad format and work on mastering more important aspects like targeting or optimization.

Forgetting to Set Budget Limits

Mistakes can be costly, but budget limits are your safety net against these mistakes.

When I was starting, I forgot to set budget limits and ended up spending $22,362 of my clients' money in just 18 hours.

Don't be a dummy like me. Set a budget limit.

Starting too Broad and Ambitious

The prospect of creating and seeing your own ads out in the real world is super exciting.

A lot of people get so pumped up they end up biting off more than they can chew: Launching several campaigns, dozens of ad variations, and using large budgets.

What started as an exciting project quickly becomes unwieldy and overwhelming.

When it comes to digital advertising, unless you have a lot of experience, it's better to start small: Launch a single campaign, target a single audience, focus on a single goal, and stick to a small budget.

Forget about followers and likes. **Learn how to create a massively profitable social media strategy from scratch.**
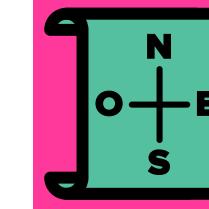
Let's talk about social media.

First, I want to get rid of some misconceptions about social media marketing.

- *"I use Facebook every day, so I'm good at social media marketing. It's easy."*

Social media marketing is not easy. Often times, it requires an entire team to manage a single social media channel.

- *"Companies should hire kids who post the dankest memes on Twitter and know how to use the coolest filters on Instagram stories to run social media for them."*

Being good at social media is not the same as being good at social media marketing. In fact, many social media influencers with thousands of followers struggle to make money.

- *"A social media marketer's job is to create content that goes viral on social media."*

Going viral, number of followers, likes, retweets are vanity metrics. Many businesses are incredibly successful at social media marketing without ever going viral or gathering a massive following.

In reality, social media marketing is the process of strategically using social channels to generate *meaningful* and *measurable* impact for a business.

You shouldn't use social media because it's cool or trendy.

You should use social media because it's a strategic channel you can use to grow any business.

This guide is designed to teach you exactly how to do that.
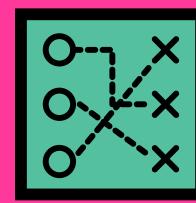
STRATEGY: HOW TO CREATE A POWERFUL SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGY FROM SCRATCH

Do you know why most companies fail at social media?

Because when you look at most companies' social media presence, you can't help but think:

"Just another company's social media account."

Most of them follow the same pattern:

1. They figured they "needed to be on social media"
2. They looked up the best times to post on social media
3. They looked up the right amount of times to post on social media
4. They think they can "hack" growth of their account by automatically following a lot of people
5. They post a "text + image + hashtag + link" combo on every social channel
6. Their posts get this much engagement:

Ouch.

To be successful in social media marketing, you need to avoid becoming just another "company on social media."

Companies who do great in social media marketing actually use social media as it was intended and **strive to have one of the best accounts in each channel**—period.

- The best companies on Twitter start and engage in interesting or funny conversations with their followers (and even other brands).

- The best companies on Instagram publish content that inspires and excites their followers.

You get the point.

To create a world-class social media strategy, you need to follow a simple framework:

1. **Understand and tackle the 3 components of social media marketing:** Monitoring, engagement, and conversion.

2. **Pick the right channels to participate in** and learn how each channel fundamentally works.

3. **Create world-class content for social media** that actually drives engagement and action.

Let's go over each of these next.

The 3 Components of Social Media Marketing

If you plan on becoming a social media marketer, you need to do more than just come up with content to post.

A comprehensive social media marketing strategy covers three components: Monitoring, engagement, and conversion.

Let's start with monitoring.

Regardless of whether you decide to participate in social media, people are going to talk about you using their social accounts.

In some cases, users will talk about how much they love your products—which you can use to your advantage and build some social proof around your brand.

Potential customers will have questions about your product or service—you can address these and remove objections to purchasing.
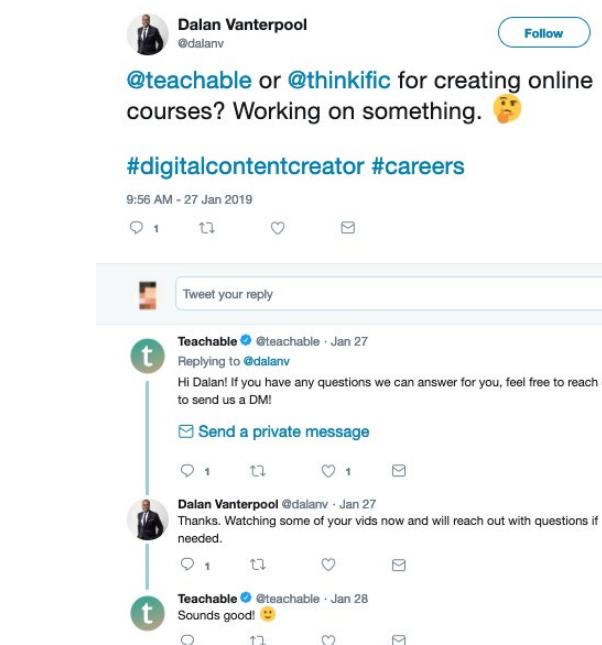
Other times, users will have questions, complaints, support requests, or simply feedback—replying to these in a timely manner will help you keep a high level of satisfaction with your product or service.

All of these conversations will happen whether you're present or not—unless you have a monitoring strategy in place, they will happen without you.

Your goal with social media monitoring is to address all mentions of your brand or related terms (e.g. specific products) in a way that people talking about your brand feel listened to and cared for.

To get started with monitoring, you need to:

1. Use available tools to track and consolidate mentions of your brand and related terms in social media (check the "Tools" section of this guide to learn about our favorite software to do this)—this is known as "social listening."

2. Implement a process to classify mentions by type (praise, product queries, and support requests) the steps to follow for each type (e.g. share or amplify, direct to support page, forward to the sales team).

Use these resources to get started:

- What is Social Listening, Why it Matters, and 10 Tools to Make it Easier

- The Simple Blueprint for Social Media Monitoring

The next component of social media marketing is engagement.

This is the most straightforward use of social media, but also the one that most companies get wrong.

You'll use social media channels to build an audience by sharing interesting and relevant content.

This doesn't mean continually broadcasting how awesome your product is.

No one wants that.

Social media engagement is deeply connected to your content marketing strategy.

Instead of thinking like an advertiser (just pushing your product), you need to think like a publisher or media company—that means your engagement goal is to **create and share content that people actually enjoy and want to consume.**

There is no one-size-fits-all formula for this, and you should ignore anyone claiming to have this cool "trick" or "hack" for creating engaging social media content.

To figure out what works for your company, you'll need to:

1. Understand who your target persona is. For example, Airbnb focuses its LinkedIn efforts on potential employees and Instagram on guests.

Airbnb on LinkedIn

Airbnb on Instagram
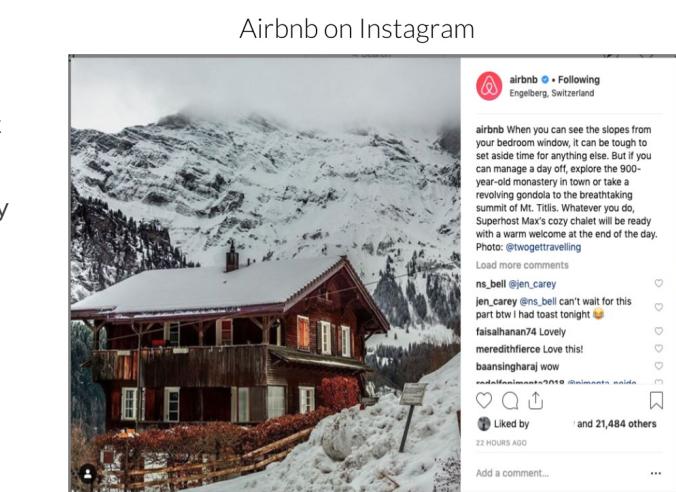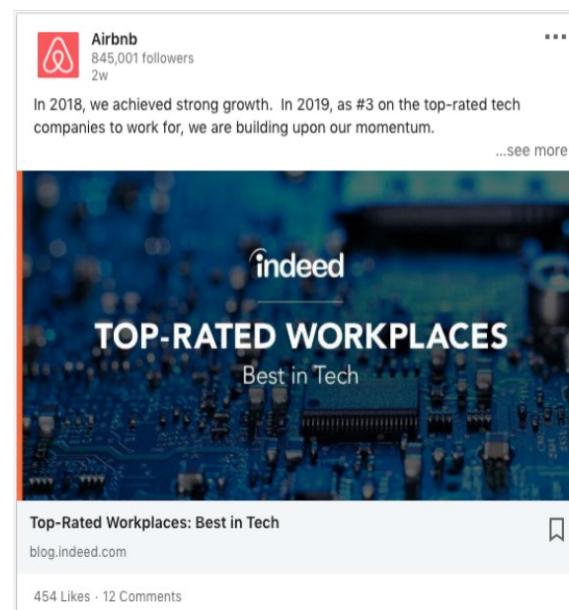
2. Define the main role of each social media channel within your sales funnel. For example, instead of sharing content about the features on their cameras (middle-of-the-funnel), GoPro uses their Instagram account to inspire their audience with amazing video and photography (top-of-the-funnel).
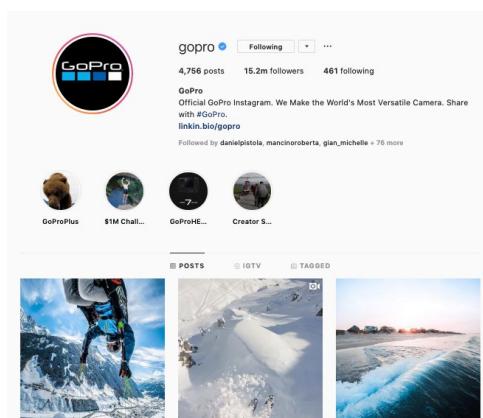
3. Adapt your message to the social media channels you participate in. For example, Mailchimp adapts their campaign assets to take advantage of the strengths of each channel.

Valentine's Day Campaign on Twitter   Valentine's Day Campaign on Instagram
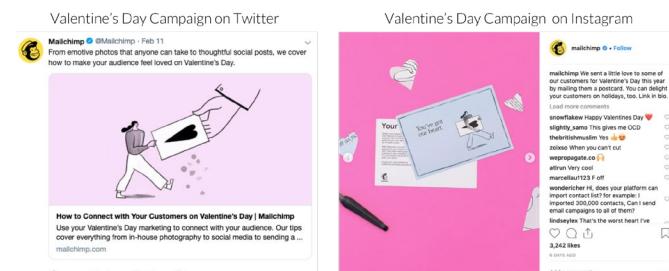
To prepare your engagement strategy, you'll need to work on your content marketing strategy first—for that, check out the **"Content Marketing Strategy"** chapter of this guide.

The last component of your social media marketing strategy is conversion.

This is what differentiates a social media *influencer* from a social media *marketer*.

Having thousands or millions of followers on your accounts will not help your business unless you can get a portion of them to become your customers.

Social media is great for building audiences but it has a critical limitation for businesses.

Even though you own a social media profile, **your followers are still "owned" by the social channel.**

In fact, most social media channels are purposely built to keep users from leaving the platform, that's why:

- There's no easy way to move all your followers from one platform to another

- You have no contact information you can use to reach out to them directly

- Your content's visibility is subject to the social channels' algorithms

- You have to compete for attention against every other connection each of your followers have

That's why your ultimate goal is to turn your social audience into website visitors, leads, and customers.

You can convert social media audiences via direct or indirect conversions.

Direct conversions are those that happen by directly asking your followers to perform an action that will turn them into leads or customers.

For example, check out a direct conversion flow by Under Armour:
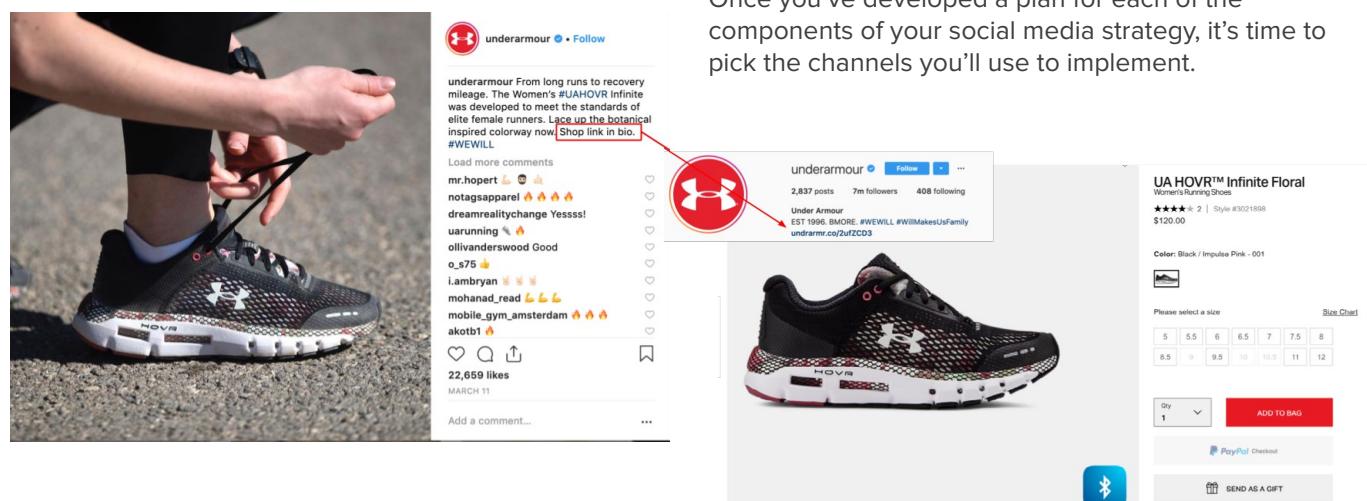
Indirect conversions, on the other hand, consists of simply getting your social audience to visit your website without necessarily asking them to purchase or submit contact information.

Instead, you merely want them to visit so they can become part of your remarketing audience, which will allow you to target them with ads later on.

For example, check out an indirect conversion flow by Airtable:

Post with link   User visits
to your blog   your site

Social network   Remarketing ad in
tracks the visit   the social network
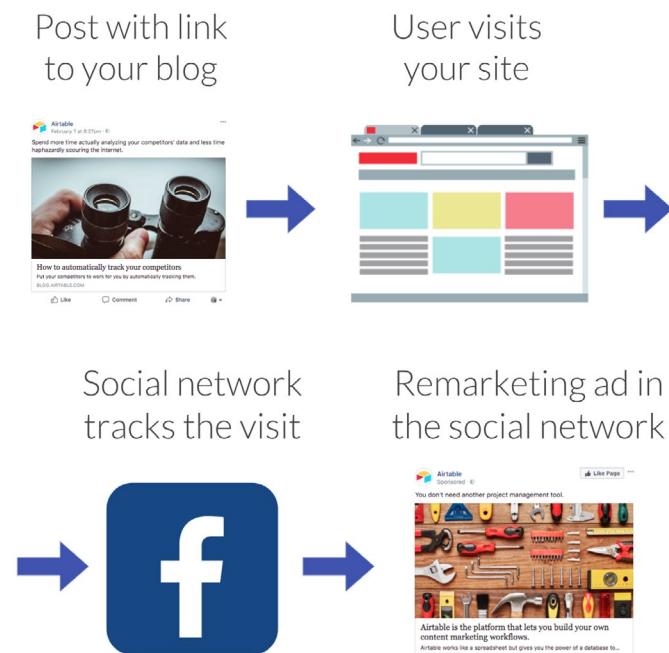
Remember, conversion is not the only purpose of your social channel and trying too hard to convert your social audience can be detrimental to your entire strategy—you need to balance this with monitoring and engagement, otherwise, you'll come off as too salesy.

Once you've developed a plan for each of the components of your social media strategy, it's time to pick the channels you'll use to implement.

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This step is about self-control more than anything else.

When you see news articles like this...

TikTok surpassed Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat & YouTube in downloads last month

Sarah Perez @sarahintampa / 4 months ago   💬 Comment

...you need to resist the feeling of FOMO that urges you to create an account for your business in [*insert latest trending social media*].

New social channels appear all the time and gain millions of users overnight—that doesn't mean it's a good idea to jump in.

Instead, you need to be strategic about the selection of the social channels you'll participate in.

Three simple criteria you can use are:

1. Is your target persona participating in this channel?

This is pretty self-explanatory. Make sure the people you want to reach are actually users of the social channel you're planning to participate in.

2. What's the role you'll play in the channel? Are you going to use it for monitoring, engagement, or conversion?

For example, Twitter users tend to expect companies to provide some level of support—regardless of whether you plan on supporting people via Twitter or not. If your company plans on participating on Twitter, you need to include monitoring in your channel strategy.

3. What type of content are the users consuming and how are they consuming it? Do you have the skills and bandwidth to create this content?

Each social channel has been designed around a "keystone format."

For example, Instagram is heavy on high-quality photography and video. If you decide to create an Instagram account, you usually can't just use stock images with text overlays—you will probably need to invest time and resources into producing professional-looking content.

Moreover, different channels have different consumption behaviors: Active vs. passive.

Active channels are those in which the users have "intent". They know what they want to see and actively search for it—this is usually the case for Pinterest and YouTube.

For active channels, you can create content, optimize it for the channel's search engine and get views and engagement for it over time.

This means that you don't necessarily need to continuously publish new content—you might create it once and continue getting views, engagement, and conversions for years to come.

However, this doesn't mean inactive channels are any easier. You'll need to invest a considerable amount of time in optimizing and getting your content to be at the top of those searches.
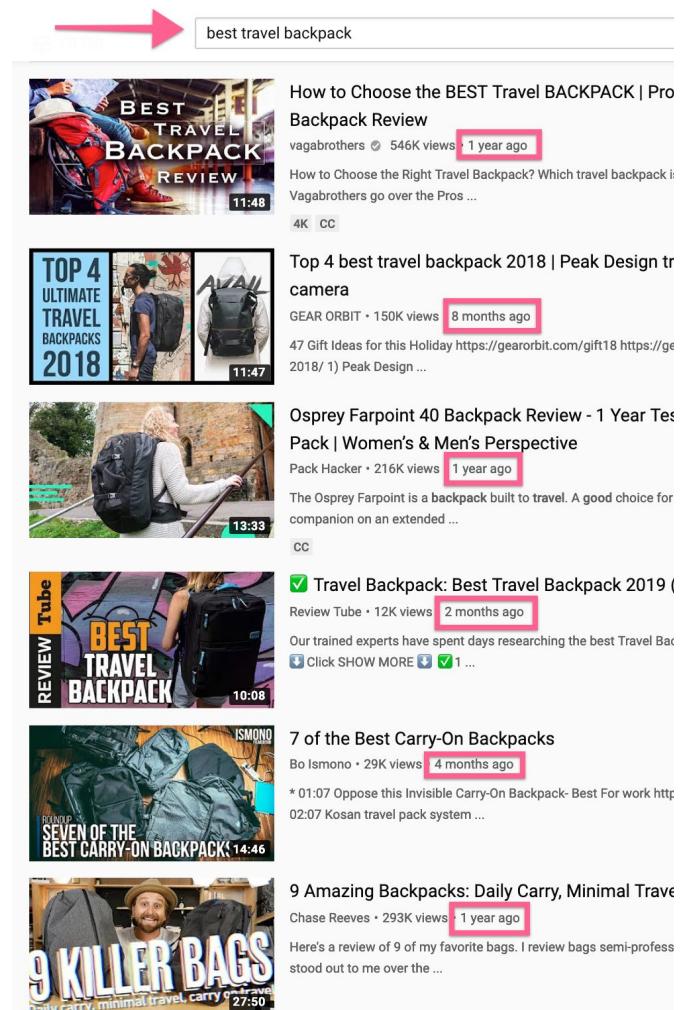
Passive channels, on the other hand, are those in which the users don't have a specific intent—they are just browsing.

For example, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter are mostly inactive channels.

To participate in inactive channels, you'll need to constantly push new content to people's feeds in order to continue getting views, engagement, and conversions.

Creating content for passive channels requires you to always stay on top of the relevant conversations happening in the social channel and being able to keep a never-ending content calendar going.

Selecting channels requires you to understand each channel. To make this easier on you, we've created a cheat sheet for the most popular social channels.
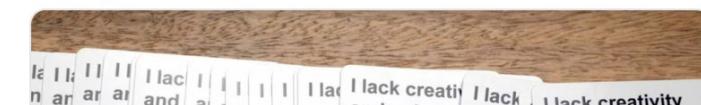
CHANNEL	PLATFORM CONSUMPTION	PURPOSE	KEYSTONE FORMATS	POSTING CADENCE	PAID CAPABILITIES	REPORTING CAPABILITIES	CUSTOMER SERVICE
FACEBOOK	Passive	Storytelling + Content Conversions Monitoring + Engagement	Video Photo/graphic/image Live Stories	3-5x per Week	Very High	High	Yes
TWITTER	Passive	Monitoring + Engagement Announcements Content	Photo/graphic/image Gif Video	Daily	High	High	Yes
INSTAGRAM	Active + Passive	Storytelling + Content Announcements	Photo/graphic/image Stories Live	Daily	Medium	Medium	Yes
LINKEDIN	Active	Announcements Recruiting	Articles/news Links Job postings	1x per Week	Low	Low	No
SNAPCHAT	Passive	Short-form storytelling	Stories Photography	Daily	Low	Low	No
MEDIUM	Active	Long-form storytelling	Long-form editorial Articles/Blogs	2-4x per Month	Low	Low	No
PINTEREST	Active	Content Conversion	Photo/graphic/image Links Infographics	4-8x per Month	Medium	Medium	No
YOUTUBE	Active	Storytelling + Content	Video Live	3-8x per Month	High	Medium	No

Just click here to get the cheat sheet.

Creating World-Class Social Media Content

I've mentioned this several times in this guide already, but it's important I say it again.

Forget about the "text + image + hashtag + link" combo.

It - just - doesn't - work.

There is no "secret formula" that any company can use to create great social media content.

If you want your audience to like, share, and talk about your content, you need to understand how a 21st-century user consumes content online.

Fortunately, you're one of them.

When was the last time you watched an entire Instagram video without scrolling away? Do you check your phone while you're watching Netflix?

You get the point.

Online audience's attention spans are shorter than ever and there's no shortage of competition for their attention.

To create world-class social media content is no different to creating a world-class content marketing strategy, you need to:

1. Gain a deep understanding of who your target customers are (including their desires, wants, and needs)—this is called creating **target personas.**

2. Craft simple messaging for each of your target personas at each stage of the funnel—this is called creating **single-minded value propositions (SMVP).**

3. Adapt your message to the right format for each social channel—this is called choosing your **content types.**

4. Create content that people want to consume AND that helps you achieve your business goals—this is called creating **attention-grabbing content.**

Use these resources to get started:

- Creating World-Class Social Media Content Mini-Course

- Read the **"Content Marketing Strategy"** chapter of this guide

Distributing Your Social Media Content

Let's recap what you've accomplished so far with your social media marketing strategy:

1. You understand the main components of social media marketing and crafted plans to cover each of them

2. You've selected the best social media channels to implement your strategy

3. You understand your audience and came up with a strategy to create content they actually want to consume, that adapts to each channel

Now, you only have one step to go—but it's a big one:

4. You need to make sure you actually reach your target audience

There are three main methods of distribution: Owned, paid, and earned.

Owned distribution consists of sending your content to your existing audience.
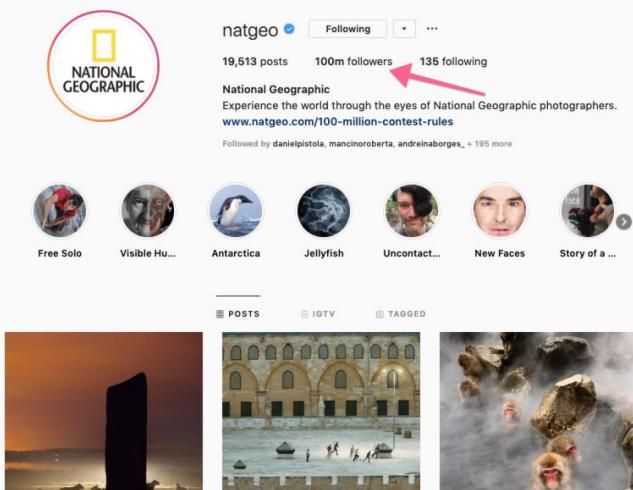
Unless you have a large existing follower base, you can't rely solely on owned distribution.

Paid distribution is exactly what it sounds like—you pay to get your content in front of your target audience.

For example, you could leverage a social channel's advertising platform.
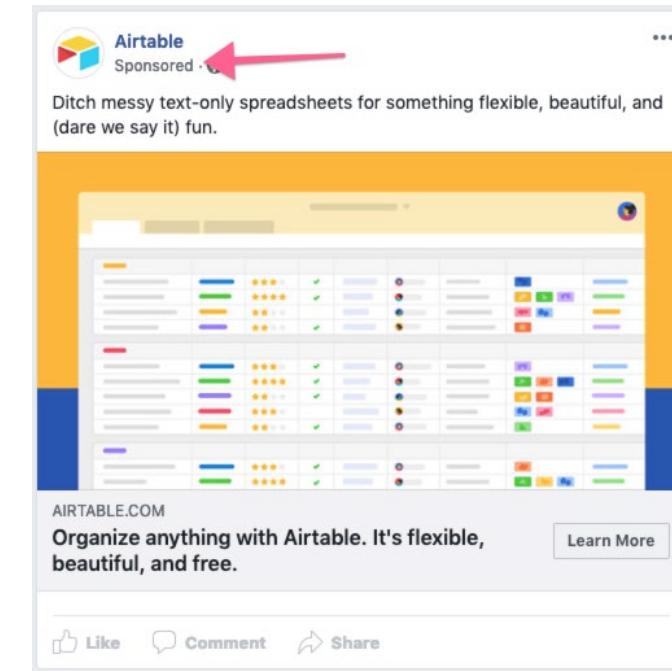
Or you could pay someone who already has an audience that matches your target to promote your message.

To learn more about paid distribution, check out the **"Digital Advertising Strategy"** chapter of this guide.

Lastly, **earned distribution** consists of getting other people to share your content (without the need for payment).

The first step to doing this is creating content that's so good people want to share it—which we covered in the previous section of this guide ("Creating World-Class Social Media Content").

After you've done that, you have to nudge people to share.

For example, you can reach out to influencers you mentioned in your content to let them know they've been included.

You can include social sharing buttons in your content.

Or you can directly ask audiences to share with their own network.
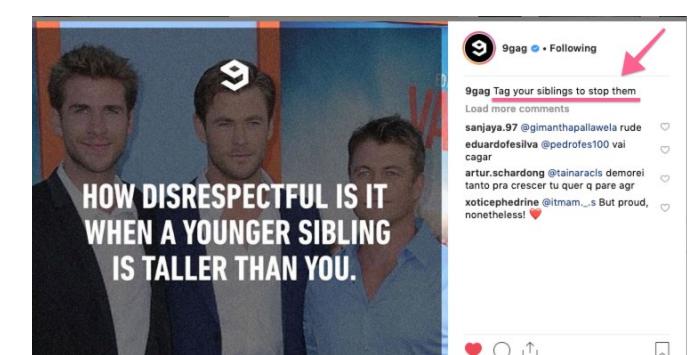
A comprehensive social media marketing strategy should cover owned, paid, and earned distribution.

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STATS: SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING METRICS
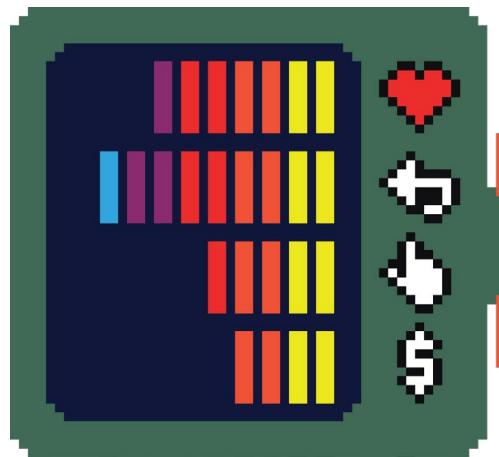
Social media is one of the hardest channels to track and measure the impact of.

It's very easy to get this wrong.

It's not for the lack of metrics or things to track.

It's because:

1. Metrics across social platforms (and even across different content formats within a single platform) are not at all standard—which makes it hard to make any type of apples-to-apples analysis (i.e. how do you compare a reaction on an Instagram story vs a retweet?)

2. People tend to focus on tracking the wrong metrics—sometimes using metrics that don't help them make decisions that move the needle for their business.

Avinash Kaushik, a web analytics expert, proposes a simple framework you can use to avoid these problems.

Applause Rate

Applause rate is a proxy for how successful is your social media content at generating a reaction from your audience.

The applause rate can be calculated as the **total number of likes, favorites, upvotes, reactions, or similar action over a period of time, divided by the size of your audience.** For example:

Facebook Page applause rate = (Total number of reactions on your Facebook Posts) / (Number of fans of your Facebook page).

An increase in your applause rate means that you're being successful at getting your audience to react to your content.

Amplification Rate

Amplification rate is a measure of how much your audience is sharing your content with their networks.

The amplification rate can be calculated as the total number of retweets, shares, reposts, repins, or equivalent action over a period of time, divided by the size of your audience.

For example:

Twitter amplification rate = (Total number of retweets on your tweets) / (Number of followers of your Twitter account).

This is a great proxy for how much earned distribution you're getting for your social content.
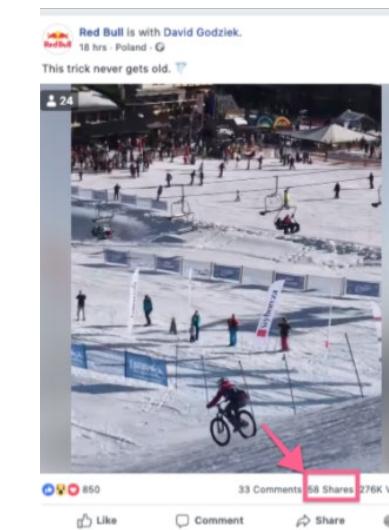
Conversation Rate

Conversation rate is a metric that measures how much your audience is responding to your content.

The conversation rate can be calculated as the **total number of comments, replies, or equivalent action over a period of time, divided by the size of your audience.**

For example:

Instagram post conversation rate = (Total number of comments on your Instagram posts) / (Number of followers of your Instagram account).

A high conversation rate means your audience is providing feedback on your content (either positive or negative). You can leverage social channels with a high conversation rate to interact more closely with your audience.

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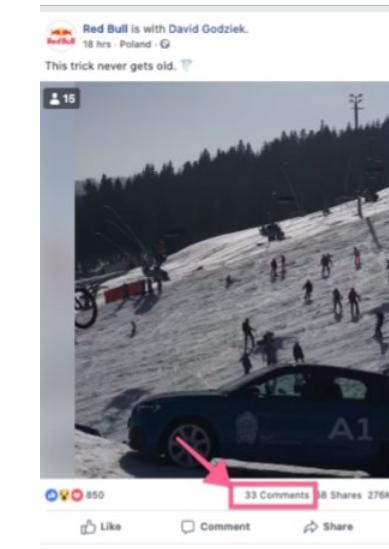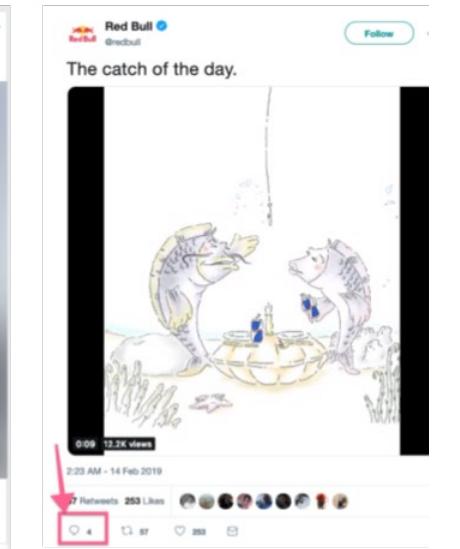
Business Metrics

All of the metrics so far relate to the users' engagement within social media channels. They are important, but they're not critical. Business metrics, however, are critical.

As a brief reminder, we do not invest in social media marketing because it's trendy. We invest in it, only if it has a measurable impact on our business' bottom line.

You can do this by tracking traffic to your website referred by social media channels.

Here are a couple of examples:

- The success of a social media campaign designed to drive visitors to a blog post (top-of-the-funnel) can be measured by checking the traffic referred by posts belonging to that campaign.
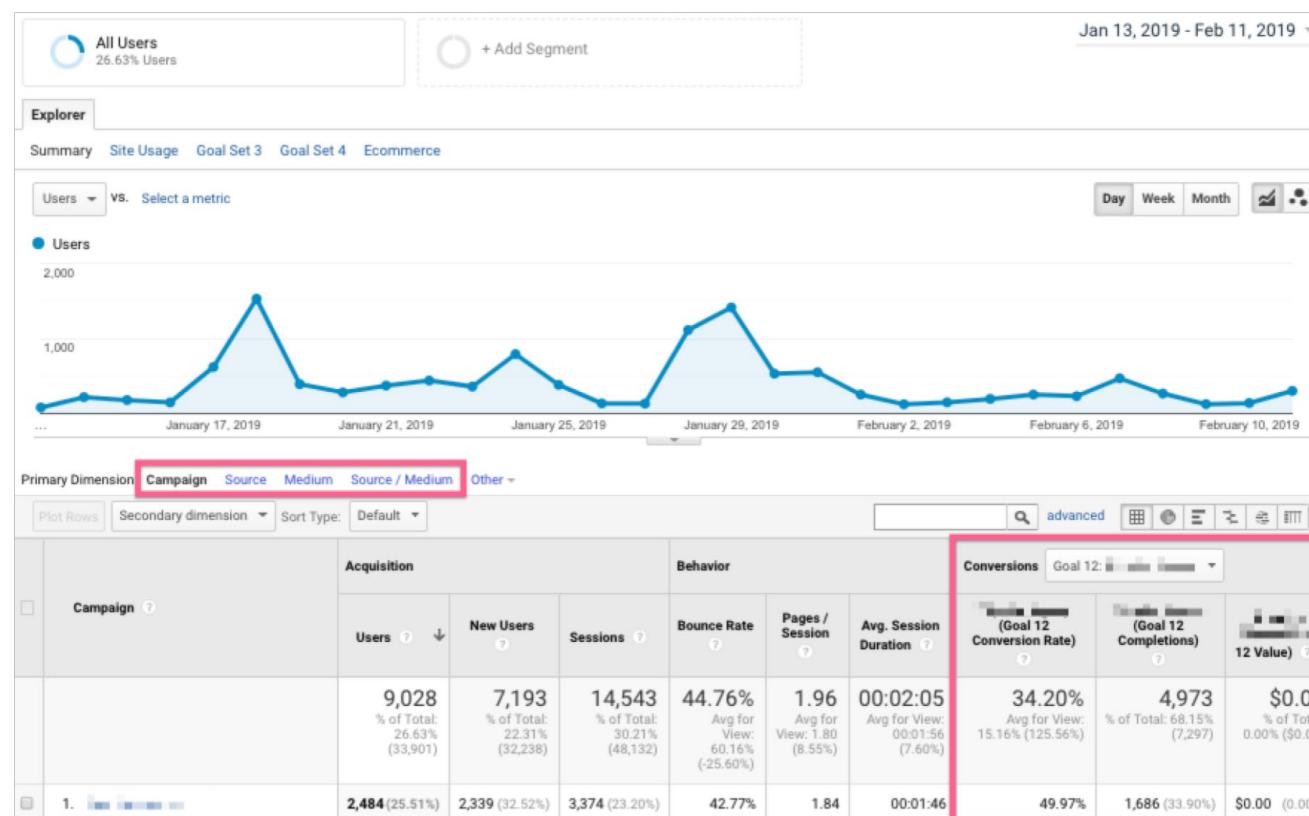
- The success of a social media campaign for Black Friday sales can be measured by the **number of sales** or revenue generated by social media traffic.

To do this, you can use UTM tracking parameters in the URLs you include in your social media campaigns—these will allow you to track the performance of your campaigns within Google Analytics.

Here are some resources to help you get started:

- Perfect UTM Tracking Codes For Google Analytics

- Check out the "Website Analytics Strategy" chapter of this guide to learn more about tracking your business metrics.
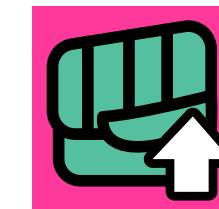
POWER-UPS: THE BEST DIGITAL ADVERTISING TOOLS

Sometimes it feels like there's a new social media tool coming up every day.

If you get too into following influencers and social media blogs, you'll start to feel like you need to have every single one of them.

Don't let the FOMO get you.

Especially because some tools will promise to help you dramatically grow your social media presence.

Don't pay attention to this. Your strategy is much more important than the tools you use, and there isn't a single tool that will make or break your social strategy.

If you're getting started, this is our recommended stack of tools:

Social Monitoring Tools

These tools will make it easy to gather social mentions from many different channels—some will even help you respond to them directly.

- **Google Alerts:** Even though this isn't a tool designed specifically for social media, you can use Google Alerts to get regular notifications for mentions of specific keywords that appear on Google's index.
Check out Google Alerts

- **Hootsuite:** Among its many features, Hootsuite allows you to create "streams" to consolidate mentions of specific keywords across several social channels. Plus, you can easily reply to mentions and assign to different team members.
Check out Hootsuite

- **Buffer:** Another comprehensive social media management tool. Buffer's Reply product consolidates social media mentions and makes it easy to collaborate with a team to respond.
Check out Buffer
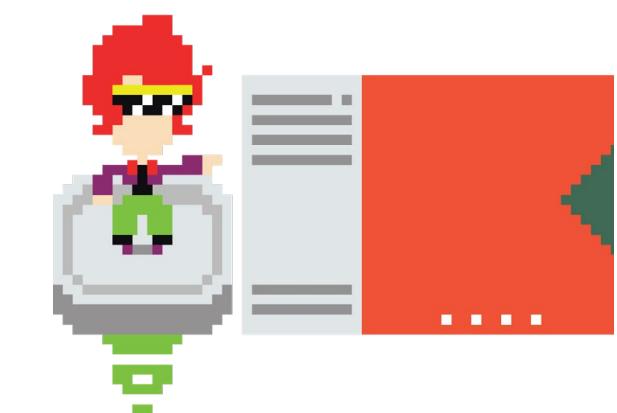
Social Content Tools

These tools will help you create and distribute your social content.

- **BuzzSumo:** Creating content people like is much easier once you know what the most popular content already out there is. BuzzSumo makes it easy to find which content has been shared massively on social media and which influencers have helped to achieve that.
Check out BuzzSumo

- **Canva:** If you're not a designer, Canva can help you quickly put together beautiful design assets for your social posts. Their library of templates makes it easy not to mess up if you, like me, lack an eye for design.
Check out Canva

- **Hootsuite:** Offers an advanced platform to manage your content library and schedule it to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and YouTube.
Check out Hootsuite

- **Buffer:** Includes a super user-friendly platform to schedule content for Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Pinterest.
Check out Buffer

- **MeetEdgar:** Another scheduling tool with a big differentiator—MeetEdgar includes a feature to automate "continuous posting" to continue sharing your evergreen content on your social channels even if you reach the end of your content queue, which saves you time in trying to continually add new posts to share.
Check out MeetEdgar

- **Sumo:** Although not exclusively a social media tool. Sumo is a great tool to easily add social sharing buttons to any website—making it easy for your visitors to share your content on social media.
Check out Sumo
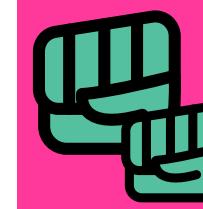
HELPERS: GREAT SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING PEOPLE AND BLOGS TO FOLLOW

Unfortunately, everyone and their mom claims to be a "social media marketing guru" these days - yet many of them are incapable of using social media to grow a business.

We've put together a list of people and blogs you can actually trust:

Melyssa Griffin: Melyssa has managed to build a successful business by leveraging blogging and social media. She's a Pinterest and Instagram expert and usually shares great tactics on how to succeed in those channels.
Check out Melyssa's blog

Foundr: Even though it's a site focused on entrepreneurship and online business, the Foundr team has put together some excellent resources on Instagram marketing.
Check out the Foundr blog

Social Media Examiner: Social media changes faster than any other digital marketing channel. With Social Media Examiner, you can stay up-to-date with everything that's going on.
Check out Social Media Examiner

Sumo Blog: This blog covers many topics of digital marketing and building a business. It includes some of the most comprehensive and actional social media marketing case studies.
Check out the Sumo blog

Plus, as a general rule, it's a great idea for you to follow companies doing really well on social media and trying to reverse-engineer their strategies and tactics.

These are some of our favorite ones:
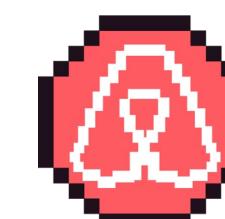
Airbnb (Instagram): Their efforts on Instagram have earned them several awards, including "best brand on Instagram" for several years.
Follow Airbnb on Instagram

Austen Allred (Twitter): A great example of a startup founder leveraging his Twitter presence to build his company's brand and amplify success cases.
Follow Austen on Twitter
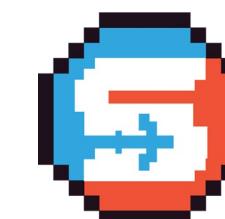
Scott's Cheap Flights (Twitter): This small company manages to constantly create content their followers love engaging with— which is no small feat.
Follow Scott's Cheap Flights on Twitter

Buzzfeed (Facebook): The classic example of a brand thriving on social media. Whether you like their content or not, Buzzfeed's success in Facebook can't be questioned.
Check out Buzzfeed on Facebook

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Like with any digital marketing skill, practice is the only way to get really good at social media marketing.

Moreover, having a portfolio of successful social media campaigns will make it a lot easier for you to find work, clients, and grow within the industry.

When you're a beginner, you have three options to get hands-on experience:

- **Use social media marketing on your own business.** If you already have a business, you can simply use what you've learned to grow it.

- **Start your own social media account,** and try to use it to achieve a business goal (sales, traffic, users, etc.)—you don't necessarily need to start a business, but you could become an affiliate and refer traffic to earn a commission. This is a great way to get started because you'll have the freedom to experiment as much as you want.

- Also, a great alternative is to **find a business who you can help with social media marketing** and that will give you access to publish on their social accounts. With this option you will have less freedom to experiment and but you might not need to start building an audience from scratch.

Once you have this figured out, use the following framework to get started:

1. Finish reading this guide, of course.

   Outcome: You will have a solid foundation of how social media marketing fundamentally works—plus, the final section of this guide will help you avoid some common pitfalls for beginner social media marketers.

2. Set up social listening for your brand name and related terms (e.g. common misspellings, product name, competitors' brands, founder's name) using Google Alerts and Hootsuite's free plan.

   Outcome: You will have a simple way to collect and respond to relevant mentions in social media. This is the bare minimum you have to do for any social media marketing strategy.

3. Select 1 or 2 channels to participate in. Don't pick more than that—use the social media channel selection cheat sheet.

   Outcome: Starting with a narrow focus will make it easier to grow and engage an audience.

4. Research your target audience, design a communication strategy (check out the "**Content Marketing Strategy**" chapter of this guide and our Social Media Content Mini-Course), create a social media content calendar (check out our social media content calendar template), and schedule your content using Hootsuite or Buffer.

   Outcome: You will be able to create content your social audience actually wants to consume and engages with.

5. Periodically, attempt to convert your social audience into website visitors, leads, users, or customers. Remember to use UTM-tagged URLs so you can track traffic within Google Analytics and attribute conversions back to your social campaigns.

   Outcome: You will learn how to leverage your social media presence to generate business results.

6. Track applause, amplification, conversion rates every week or month. Plus, analyze the business performance of social media traffic.

   Outcome: You will get a better understanding of the type of content works best at generating engagement and conversions.

There are some mistakes we consistently see most new social media marketers make.

These can set you back or slow down your progression and prevent you from achieving meaningful business results.

We made a quick guide so you can avoid these:

Worrying too Much About "Best Times to Post" or "Best Hashtags"

This is a small one—but it's so common, it deserved a place in our guide.

Beginners tend to worry too much about posting at the best possible time or using the right hashtags to get more visibility.

This can lead to spending a ton of time researching things that don't matter.

I'll be super direct here: Mediocre content is still mediocre regardless of when you post it and which hashtags you use.

Your time is much better spent working on having a solid strategy and producing good content.

Vanity Metrics

Social media channels are designed to get their users to spend as much time as possible using the app.

They use many tactics to do this—among them, is the creation of metrics that gets their users excited.

You should avoid falling for these metrics as a social media marketer.

Vanity metrics are those that seem to make you feel good about yourself but don't really matter in terms of generating business results.

Some common examples of vanity metrics include number of followers, having a verified account, and "Reddit gold".

New Social Channel FOMO

I talked about this in the channel selection section of this guide, but it's worth repeating.

You will see a new social media channel appear and get millions of downloads and users overnight.

You will be bombarded by blog posts about why you absolutely NEED to participate in this new social channel and how you're missing out if you don't.

You need to resist the urge to jump in a participate right away.

Instead, stop to think whether it really makes sense for your business to jump in.

8 THE WEBSITE ANALYTICS STRATEGY GUIDE

Learn **how to massively increase traffic and sales with a powerful analytics strategy.**

WORLD MAP: WHAT IS WEB ANALYTICS?

When digital marketing started, it promised to do something that traditional marketers couldn't do:

Understand how their efforts helped the business' bottom line.

I'm sure you've heard the phrase: *"Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is I don't know which half."*

That was going to change.

Digital marketers had access to an unprecedented amount of data, which allowed them to know exactly which of their campaigns did and didn't work.

This new type of analytical marketer was trained to use data to make better business decisions.

Except this didn't really happen.

It's true that digital marketers use more data than what was traditionally available…

…but when it comes to understanding the bigger picture, things look more like this.
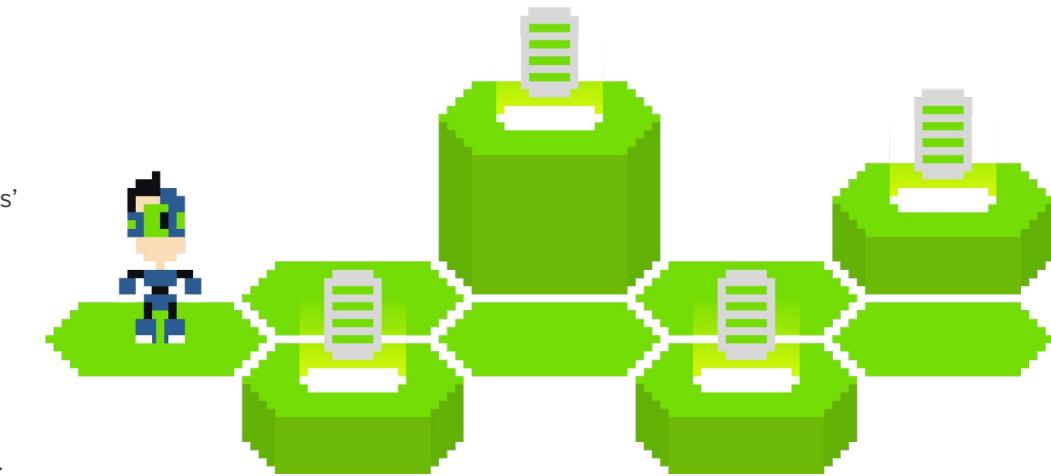
I say this from experience—I was a digital-marketing left shark for longer than I care to admit.

The problem is that a lot of digital marketers don't really understand web analytics.

Web analytics is the process of tracking, understanding, and making data-driven decisions that generate business growth.

If you're not doing those three things (track, understand, and act), you've only scratched the surface of what you can achieve as a digital marketer.

This guide will teach you EXACTLY how to do this, even if you have zero web analytics experience.

I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT I'M DOING
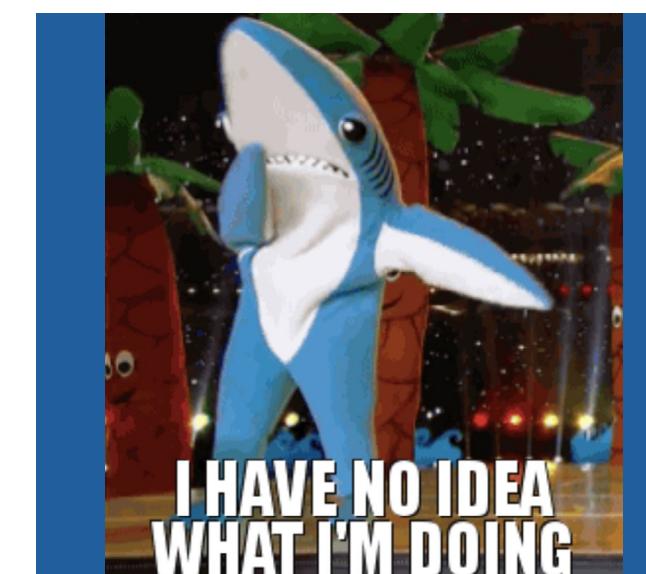
STRATEGY: HOW TO CREATE A POWERFUL WEB ANALYTICS STRATEGY FROM SCRATCH

I don't know about you, but the first time I opened up Google Analytics, I was terrified.

It's intimidating!

I thought I was going to have all the data I needed to make sense of what was going on in my business...

...but things didn't work out like I thought they would.

Expectation: At my fingertips, I was going to have data to understand exactly who my website visitors were, where they were coming from, and what they were doing on my site.

Reality: I curled up into a ball, cried, and didn't open Google Analytics again for several months.

For the longest time, I had web analytics PTSD.

The thing is that there is SO MUCH data in Google Analytics, I didn't know where to get started.

I would go into Google Analytics rabbit holes trying to make sense of what was going on and come out several hours later feeling like I hadn't learned a single thing.

After talking to dozens of digital marketers, I've learned I wasn't the only one with this problem.

The biggest challenge with web analytics is getting past the overwhelm that blocks you from extracting insights from your data and making decisions that grow your business.

Fortunately, there is a solution:

Instead of trying to track and make sense of hundreds of metrics at the same time, you can **get massive results for your business by relentlessly focusing on 5 or fewer metrics.**

If you're just getting started, you can do this by following this framework:

1. Learn how web analytics tracking fundamentally works
2. Understand the AABC of analytics
3. Create a measurement plan
4. Implement the measurement plan

Let's dig into each of these next.

Understand How Web Analytics Tracking Works

Many digital marketers make the mistake of jumping into web analytics without understanding how website visitors are tracked.

This is a little bit technical, but you don't need to be a developer to understand it.

On the flip side, if you take the time to learn this, everything will be 10x easier down the line.

How a web analytics tool like Google Analytics works can be summarized in three basic steps:

1. Data collection

In order to use Google Analytics, website owners or webmasters need to install a tracking code on their site.

```
<!-- Global site tag (gtag.js) - Google Analytics -->
<script async src="https://www.googletagmanager.com/gtag/js?id=    "></script>
<script>
  window.dataLayer = window.dataLayer || [];
  function gtag(){dataLayer.push(arguments);}
  gtag('js', new Date());

  gtag('config', '         ');
</script>
```

This code collects visitor interactions happening on that site like pages visited, clicks on specific elements of the page, or even purchase transactions.

An important element of the tracking code is being able to tell one visitor from another. For example, whether two pages were visited by a single user or different ones.

To do this, the tracking code stores a small snippet of code, called a "cookie", in each of your visitor's browsers (e.g. Google Chrome, Firefox, Safari, etc.)

You can think of this cookie as a name tag that has an anonymous but unique name on it that's associated with a specific browser.

2. Data transmission

Next, the tracking code sends the interaction data along with the information it has about the user to Google Analytics.

3. Data processing

Finally, Google Analytics takes all the data it received, calculates metrics, and presents the data in the form of reports.

These reports are what you see when you log into your Google Analytics account.

Understand the AABC of Analytics

The first time you open Google Analytics, it can be hard to make sense of all the reports and metrics presented.

Fortunately, these reports are organized in helpful groups:

- **A** - Audience
- **A** - Acquisition
- **B** - Behavior
- **C** - Conversion

The AABC groups map metrics and reports in a way that makes it easier to analyze the performance of your sales funnel.

(For a refresher on sales funnels, read the "Sales Funnels Strategy" chapter of this guide.)

Audience reports include metrics about **who your visitors are**, which can help you define your target persona.

This includes data like age, gender, location, language, and interests.

Acquisition reports tell you where your visitors are coming from. This is helpful in analyzing the performance of the top of your funnel.

This includes reports about the sources of traffic or performance of specific campaigns (e.g. Facebook Ads).

Audience Reports

Acquisition Reports
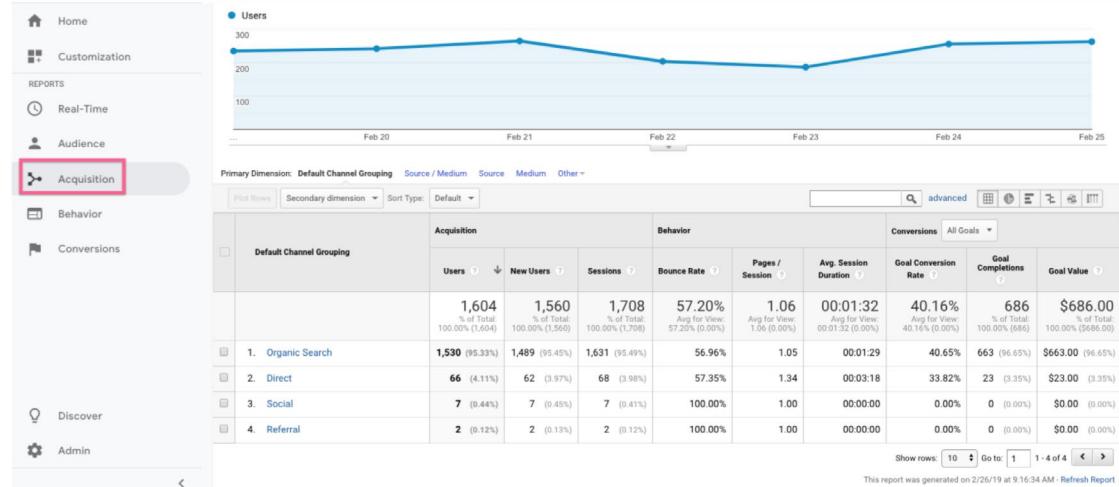
Behavior reports teach you **what your visitors do once they are on your site**. This data is important to understand the middle and bottom of your funnel.

This includes reports like the most popular landing and exit pages or the most common behavior flows within your website.

Conversion reports show **how important conversions happen on your site**. You will use this data to analyze the middle and bottom of your funnel.

This includes reports about goal conversion rates, revenue, or sales per product.

Conversion reports show **how important conversions happen on your site**. You will use this data to analyze the middle and bottom of your funnel.

This includes reports about goal conversion rates, revenue, or sales per product.

Take some time to get familiar with the different reports within each group.

You don't need to understand or even dig deep into each of them yet, but having knowledge of what's available in the tool is fundamental for the next step of creating a web analytics strategy.

Behavior Reports
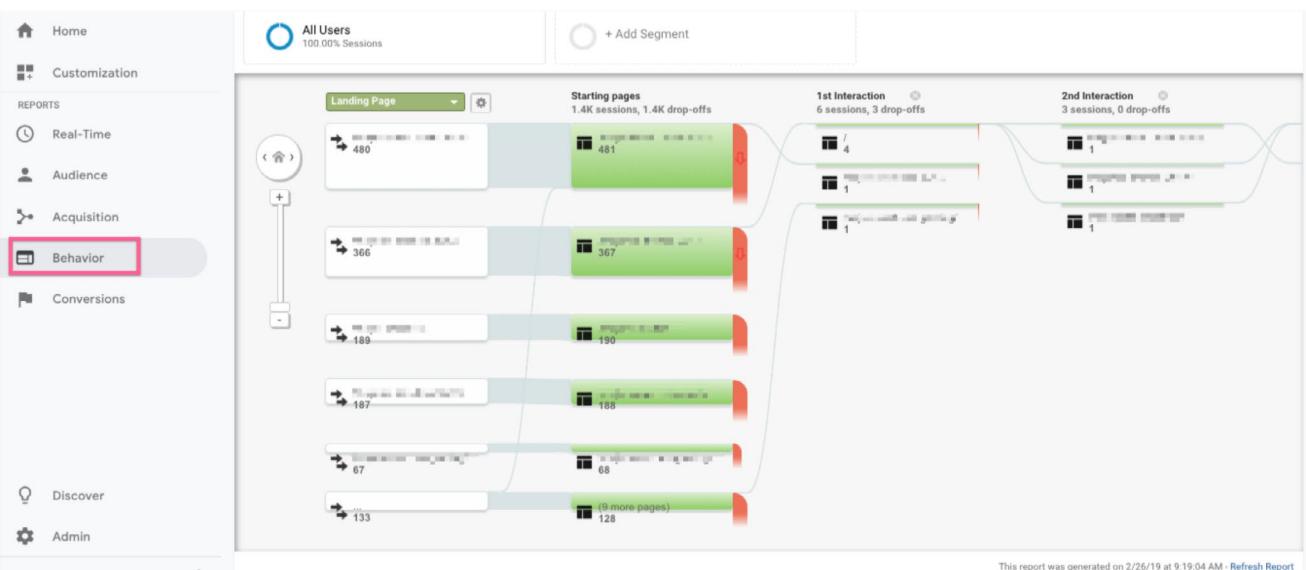
Conversion Reports
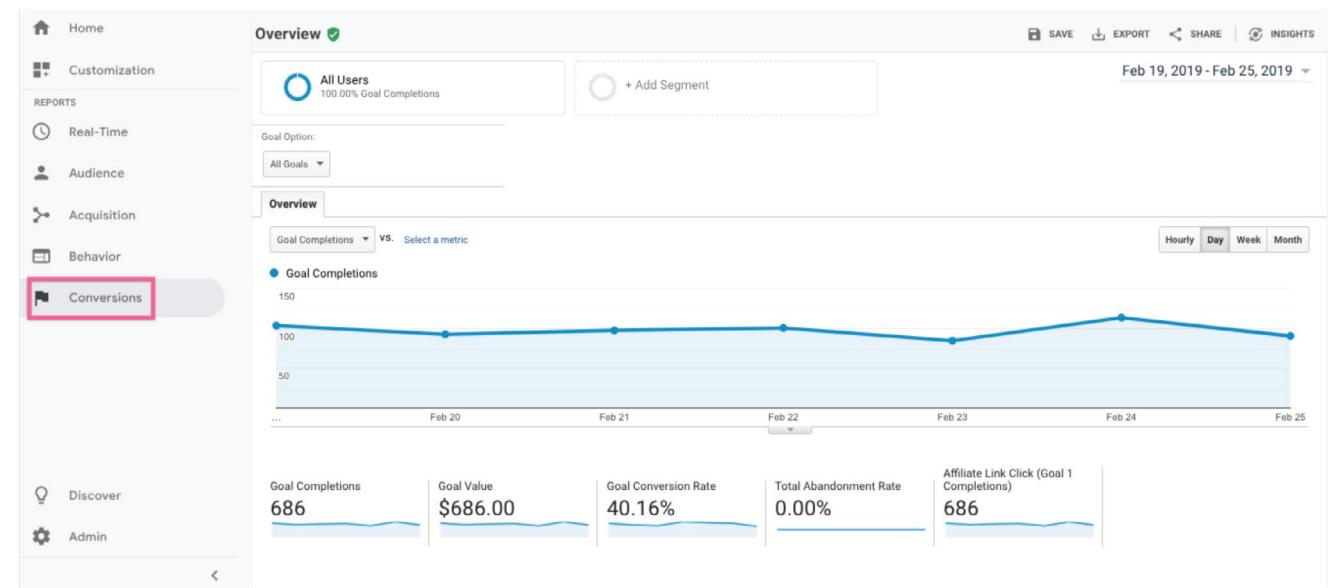
Create and Implement a Measurement Plan

This is where things start to get interesting.

Your measurement plan is a simple document that will allow you to have a relentless focus on what truly matters for your business.

By implementing your measurement plan, you will be able to quickly determine the health of your entire business in a few minutes, identify when something is wrong, and even figure out if campaigns are having a positive impact...

...all things that could take hours if you didn't follow this framework.

To create a measurement plan, you need to go through four steps:

1. Define your business goals
2. Identify proxies for those business goals
3. Choose KPIs to track performance
4. Create relevant segments

If this is the first time creating a measurement plan, you'll create this for your sales funnel.

Let's go through each of these next and use an **example of a business offering delivery of flower arrangements in the US**—we'll call this business "Farrah's Flower Delivery."

If you want to follow along, click here to get a copy of our measurement plan template.

Define your Business Goals

The first step is to figure out what the business' most important goals are.

Since you're creating a measurement plan for your sales funnel, you'll determine the most important goal for **each stage of the funnel.**

You're only allowed to choose one goal per stage of the funnel.

For our example business, Farrah's Flower Delivery, these will be our goals for each stage of the funnel:

- **Top-of-the-funnel goal:** Increase visibility and awareness of our business within the US

- **Middle-of-the-funnel goal:** Acquire leads of people interested in flower delivery

- **Bottom-of-the-funnel goal:** Generate sales

- **Monetization, retention, and love goal:** Increase customer loyalty

We're just getting started but, if you're following along, your measurement plan should look like the image below.

Most business owners focus too much on just the bottom-of-the-funnel goal: Sales or revenue.

If you did this, you'd know when sales go up or down, but it would be hard to figure out why.

By mapping a goal for each stage of the funnel, you get the full picture of the health in your business.

This way, you can fix problems (like a drop in the number of leads collected) before it even starts to noticeably hurt your bottom line.

Identify Proxies for Your Business Goals

Now that you picked your most important business goals, it's time to find proxies for each of them.

Business goals are big aspirational objectives—because of that, they are also sort of vague.

After all, you can't really measure "visibility" or "customer loyalty".

Proxies help you solve this "vagueness" problem.

Proxies are actions or events that happen on your website that help you translate those objectives into something measurable.

For example, a proxy for "visibility" could be how much new traffic your website gets; a proxy for "loyalty" could be the number of repeat customers.

To keep this simple, stick to a maximum of two proxies per business goal.

If we try to find proxies for our example business, Farrah's Flower Delivery, we might get something like this:

- **Top-of-the-funnel goal:** Increase visibility and awareness of our business within the US

  Proxy: Traffic from new visitors

- **Middle-of-the-funnel goal:** Acquire leads of people interested in flower delivery

  Proxy: Email signups

- **Bottom-of-the-funnel goal:** Generate sales

  Proxy: Sales/purchases

- **Monetization, retention, and love goal:** Increase customer loyalty

  Proxy: Repeat purchases

Our measurement plan now looks like the image below.

It can take some creativity to figure out proxies for business goals but, with time, you will get better at doing this.

Just like the previous step, picking proxies will force you to focus on getting your website visitors to perform just a few events or actions—if anything is not on the list, you shouldn't spend time or resources on it.

Measurement plan worksheet

Choose KPIs to Track Performance

At this point, you've written down your most important business goals and identified proxies that make it easier to measure those goals.

Now is the time to assign KPIs to each proxy.

KPIs allow you to translate actions on your site (a.k.a. proxies) into metrics you can easily find and read with Google Analytics.

In other words, you're translating words into numbers.

For example, let's say you want to measure "email signups".

If you have a form on your site where users can input their emails to sign up for your newsletter or download a freebie, there are a couple of ways you could do this:

- You could track the number of visitors who click on a button to submit the form

- You could track the number of visitors who visit the thank you page after submitting the form

Either of these is a good KPI for email signups because you can easily set these up and view them on Google Analytics.

To keep this simple, you should stick to a maximum of three KPIs per business goal.

If we were to pick KPIs for our example business, Farrah's Flower Delivery, we might get something like this:

- **Proxy:** Traffic from new visitors

  KPI: Number of new visitors

  KPI: Percentage of new visitors

- **Proxy:** Email signups

  KPI: Visits to the email signup thank you page

- **Proxy:** Sales/purchases

  KPI: Total revenue

  KPI: Number of transactions

- **Proxy:** Repeat purchases

  KPI: Customer lifetime value

  KPI: Average number of transactions per user

If you're following along, your measurement plan will look something like the image below.

Your KPIs remove a lot of uncertainty around whether or not you're hitting your business goals—if you want to know how your business is doing on a specific stage of the funnel, all you need to do is open Google Analytics and check a couple KPIs.

Measurement plan worksheet

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Create Relevant Segments

At this point, you've come up with business goals, identified proxies for those goals, and came up with KPIs that make it easy to measure success in Google Analytics.

If you've gotten this far, you already have a better web analytics strategy than 99% of the businesses out there.

Congrats!

With that said, this last step is what will get you to the very top of that 1% of web analysts.

Segments are a method to single out or exclude specific groups of visitors during your analysis of the data.

Not every website visitor is the same. Within most websites, you'll find:

- Mobile vs. desktop users
- New visitors vs. returning visitors
- Customers vs. non-customers
- Paid traffic vs. organic traffic vs. social traffic vs. email traffic
- Visitors interested in specific types of products
- Visitors in different stages of the funnel

And these are just a few.

Segmenting your visitors allows you to uncover trends or insights that you might've otherwise missed because you were only looking at an aggregate of all your data.

For example, you could find that mobile users purchase more often than desktop users. Or maybe current customers are getting stuck at a certain point of the buying process.

Segments are not specific to a business goal, but rather ways to analyze your entire business through the lens of a specific group of website visitors.

If we were to pick segments for our example business, Farrah's Flower Delivery, they might look something like this:

- **Segment #1:** Mobile users
- **Segment #2:** Most valuable visitors (e.g. visitors who viewed the checkout page but didn't purchase)
- **Segment #3:** Visitors referred by digital advertising campaigns
- **Segment #4:** Existing customers

If you're following along, this completes our measurement plan and it should look like the image below.

Your measurement plan doesn't just simplify how you think about analytics, it also forces you to focus all your digital marketing efforts.

- If a campaign you're running doesn't directly or indirectly impact the metrics on your measurement plan, then maybe that's a sign you shouldn't do it.
- If, on the other hand, you find yourself spending a lot of time and resources trying to improve a metric that's not in the plan, then you should think about whether this metric should substitute another that is in the measurement plan.

Measurement plan worksheet

Top of funnel goal	Increase visibility and awareness of our business within the US.	Middle of funnel goal	Acquire leads of people interested in flower delivery.	Bottom of funnel goal	Generate sales.	Bottom of funnel goal	Increase customer loyalty.
Proxies (max. 2 allowed)	1. Traffic from new visitors.	Proxies (max. 2 allowed)	1. Email signups.	Proxies (max. 2 allowed)	1. Sales/purchases.	Proxies (max. 2 allowed)	1. Repeat customers
KPIs (max. 3 allowed)	1. number of new visitors. 2. percentage of new visitors.	KPIs (max. 3 allowed)	1. visits to the email signup thank you page.	KPIs (max. 3 allowed)	1. total revenue. 2. number of transactions.	KPIs (max. 3 allowed)	1. customer lifetime value. 2. average number of transactions per user.
Segment	Mobile users.	Segment	Vvisitors who viewed the checkout page but didn't purchase.	Segment	Visitors referred by paid advertising campaigns.	Segment	Existing customers.

Implement your Measurement Plan

Once you have your plan, it's time to implement it so you can easily keep track of these things inside of Google Analytics.

In some cases, you'll be able to easily find your metrics in Google Analytics without needing to set up anything else.

For example, this is the case for metrics like users, new users, % new users, bounce rates, or pageviews.

In other cases, you might need to set up custom events or Google Analytics goals.

Sidenote: When we mention Google Analytics goals, we're not referring to the business goals in your measurement plan. Google Analytics defines "goals" as actions or events that measure how well your site or app fulfills your target objectives. In the case of your measurement plan, you can choose to set up some of your KPIs as Google Analytics goals.

For example, if your measurement plan includes KPIs like button clicks, session time, purchases, or pages per session you will have to set these up manually.

Once you've set these up, Google Analytics will automatically calculate some other helpful metrics like conversion rate per goal or revenue per channel.

This is perhaps the most technically challenging part of your web analytics strategy. However, we've created a detailed walkthrough to help you with that:

- Check out the Google Analytics Tracking SOP

Once you've set up your KPIs, it's time to create a few segments, to learn how to do that, check out this resource:

- How to Create Google Analytics Advanced Segments (Step by Step)

If you're stuck, read this blog post to get inspiration on segments you could create:

- 10 ways to segment website visitors using Google Analytics

Finally, you should track every effort your company makes to drive traffic to your site, which will allow you to identify campaigns and analyze their performance. You can do that by using UTM parameters in your campaign URLs.

- Perfect UTM Tracking Codes For Google Analytics

That's it! You've created and implemented a comprehensive measurement plan for your entire sales funnel.

This simple and powerful framework will allow you to focus on what really matters and use data to make better decisions and grow your business.

Once you've nailed this one down and are confident you are tracking what truly matters, you can start implementing the same framework to specific areas of digital marketing.

For example, you can use the measurement plan framework to evaluate any specific digital marketing channel: Content marketing, email marketing, digital advertising, SEO, and social media.

STATS: HOW TO READ WEB ANALYTICS REPORTS

Making sense of all the reports within Google Analytics can be very challenging at first.

Explaining each one in detail would make for a very long and boring read.

I'm not going to do that to you.

Instead, we'll do something better.

We're going to teach you a couple of basic principles that will allow you to **easily make sense of everything all by yourself** (without the need to memorize dozens of definitions).
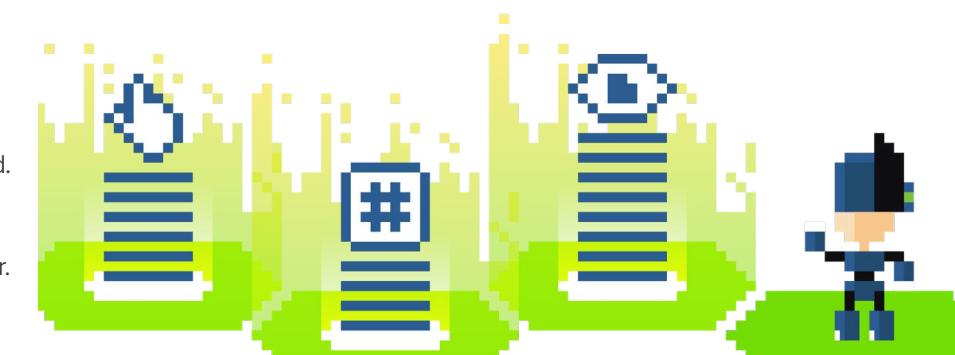
"*Teach a man to fish,*" right?

The Difference Between Metrics and Dimensions

Metrics and dimensions are the two building blocks of Google Analytics reports.

Simply put, dimensions are qualitative variables (things that can't be counted or added up) and metrics are quantitative variables (those that can be counted and added up).

- **Examples of dimensions:** Location, gender, URLs, product name
- **Examples of metrics:** Number of users, number of page views, revenue, conversion rates

You need both dimensions and metrics for web analytics to be actionable.

Without dimensions, metrics would just be numbers without context. Without metrics, dimensions would just be lists of items.

In most cases, you'll see your dimensions in the left column of tables and metrics on the right side of it:

Default Channel Grouping	Acquisition			Behavior			Conversions All Goals ▼		
	Users	New Users	Sessions	Bounce Rate	Pages / Session	Avg. Session Duration	Goal Conversion Rate	Goal Completions	Goal Value
	1,676 100.00% (1,676)	1,630 100.00% (1,630)	1,790 100.00% (1,790)	58.44% Avg for View: 58.44% (0.00%)	1.06 Avg for View: 1.06 (0.00%)	00:01:27 Avg for View: 00:01:27 (0.00%)	39.11% Avg for View: 39.11% (0.00%)	700 100.00% (700)	$700.00 100.00% ($700.00)
1. Organic Search	1,601 (95.47%)	1,557 (95.52%)	1,712 (95.64%)	58.18%	1.05	00:01:25	39.54%	677 (96.71%)	$677.00 (96.71%)
2. Direct	66 (3.94%)	63 (3.87%)	68 (3.80%)	60.29%	1.32	00:02:49	32.35%	22 (3.14%)	$22.00 (3.14%)
3. Social	7 (0.42%)	7 (0.43%)	7 (0.39%)	100.00%	1.00	00:00:00	0.00%	0 (0.00%)	$0.00 (0.00%)
4. Referral	3 (0.18%)	3 (0.18%)	3 (0.17%)	66.67%	1.00	00:00:15	33.33%	1 (0.14%)	$1.00 (0.14%)

Dimensions   **Metrics**

The Three Fundamental Metrics of Google Analytics

There are dozens of Google Analytics metrics. Fortunately, you don't need to memorize exactly what each of them mean or how they are calculated.

Instead, you can make sense of most metrics by understanding the three fundamental metrics of Google Analytics: Users, sessions, and pageviews.

- **Users:** A metric that measures how many users have visited your site.
- **Sessions:** A metric that measures how many times users have visited your site and performed actions within a specific timeframe (click here to learn more about how Google Analytics tracks sessions).
- **Pageviews:** A metric that measures how many times pages on your site have been viewed.

Sounds simple, but let's dig in a bit deeper to understand this.

Let's say we have the following scenario of a user coming to your site over several days:

On **day 1**, a user named Tommy visited your site once and viewed your homepage.

Metric	User	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Total per user
Users	Tommy	1	-	-	1
Sessions	Tommy	1	-	-	1
Pageviews	Tommy	1	-	-	1

In this case, the math is really simple. There is one user (Tommy), one session (a single visit), and one pageview (just the homepage).

On **day 2**, Tommy visited your site once again and viewed your homepage, a blog post, and a sales page.

Metric	User	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Total per user
Users	Tommy	1	1	-	1
Sessions	Tommy	1	1	-	2
Pageviews	Tommy	1	3	-	4

Still pretty straightforward, right?

Day 2 has one user (Tommy), one session (a single visit), and three pageviews (the homepage, the blog post, and the sales page).

But what's interesting is what happens when Google Analytics presents totals.

Sessions and pageviews are added up, but users aren't. That's because Google Analytics knows (thanks to the cookie place on the browser) that it's Tommy who came back to your site and not a different user.

That's why users is a much better metric than sessions or pageviews to assess growth in traffic.

Finally, on **day 3**, Tommy visited your site once in the morning and again at night, and viewed your homepage, and five different blog posts.

Metric	User	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Total per user
Users	Tommy	1	1	1	1
Sessions	Tommy	1	1	2	4
Pageviews	Tommy	1	3	6	10

You probably already know what happens.

Google Analytics will count one user (Tommy), two sessions (a visit in the morning and another at night), and six pageviews (homepage and five blog posts).

Now, let's see what happens if another guy, Chris, also visited your site over the same period of time:

- **Day 1:** Chris visits your site once and views three sales pages
- **Day 2:** Chris didn't visit your site
- **Day 3:** Chris visits your site and views the homepage

Metric	User	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Total per user	Grand total
Users	Tommy	1	1	1	1	2
	Chris	1	0	1	1	
Sessions	Tommy	1	1	2	4	6
	Chris	1	0	1	2	
Pageviews	Tommy	1	3	6	10	14
	Chris	3	0	1	4	

In this case, the total number of users is added up because each of them was identified by Google Analytics as a unique user. Plus, all sessions and pageviews are simply added up.

Once you understand the differences between users, sessions, and pageviews, it will be much easier to make sense of other metrics.

For example, after looking at the example above, it's easy to understand the metric "pages per session", which will simply be the average number of pages each user views on any given session. In this case, pages per session will be 2.3 (14 pageviews divided by 6 sessions.)

Lastly, if you find a metric you don't understand, you can simply find the definition and more information about it directly inside of Google Analytics:

Users	?
Sessions	?
Bounce Rate	?
Pages / Session	?
Avg. Session Duration	?

Users who have initiated at least one session during the date range. Learn more about how Analytics calculates the number of users.
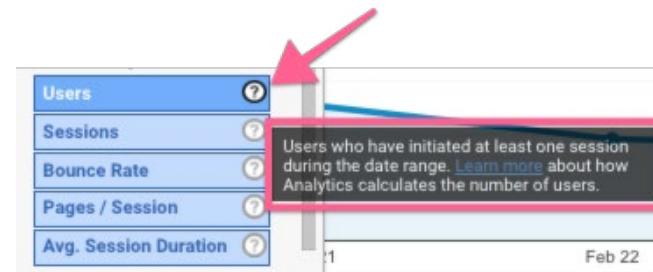
POWER-UPS: WEB ANALYTICS TOOLS

It seems like there are 20 new tools launched every day that promise to make analytics simpler and allow you to automagically find insights to massively grow your business.

Some of these are dumbed-down versions of Google Analytics, and others are way-too-sophisticated tools that you don't need unless you're an analytics pro working at a huge company.

Our recommendation is to avoid these at all costs until you've actually learned how to properly use the basic tools.

Some of the biggest, most profitable companies in the world use Google Analytics to inform their decision making. I have a funny feeling you'll be just fine without those other tools.

Fortunately, if you're a beginner, there are only two you absolutely need to use:

● **Google Analytics:** The most popular web analytics tool in the world. The free version of Google Analytics can work for the analytics needs of small business all the way up to massive companies.
Check out Google Analytics

● **Google Tag Manager:** This is an essential tool to use along with Google Analytics. With Google Tag Manager, you can easily install Google Analytics on your site and set up custom tracking without the need to touch a single line of code.
Check out Google Tag Manager

HELPERS: GREAT WEB ANALYTICS EXPERTS AND BLOGS TO FOLLOW

Discussions and blogs about web analytics tend to get very technical very quickly, which can make it really hard for a beginner to get into this discipline.

Fortunately, some people do the work of creating great content that helps beginners and experts alike to make sense of web analytics.

Here are some of our favorites:

Avinash Kaushik: Perhaps the most well-known web analytics expert in the world. He has written blog posts that ended up becoming fundamental to how people think about web analytics. His content is not highly technical, but rather very strategic and easy to digest.
Check out Avinash Kaushik's blog

Jeff Sauer: Another one of our favorite web analytics experts out there. Jeff is an analytics consultant and instructor whose content tackles complicated topics and makes them easy to understand for beginner and intermediate web analysts.
Check out the Jeffalytics blog

Google Analytics Help Center: If you are having problems understanding how a particular aspect of Google Analytics works, this should be the first thing you check. The Google Analytics team has spent years building a massive documentation library that covers most of what a beginner may need to properly use the tool.
Check out the Google Analytics Help Center

Measure School: If you are looking for easy, up-to-date video tutorials on anything related to Google Analytics or Google Tag Manager, you'll most likely find that Julian from Measure School has already created it.
Check out the Measure School Youtube Channel
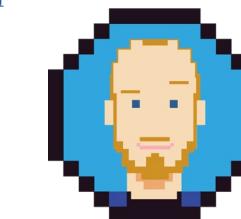
Simo Ahava: If you're looking for more advanced content on Google Tag Manager and Google Analytics, you should check out Simo Ahava's blog. It's not an easy read for beginners, but we can't tell you how many times we've run into a problem with our Analytics implementation and found the exact solution within Simo's blog.
Check out Simo's blog

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QUICKSTART GUIDE: BECOMING A WEB ANALYTICS EXPERT IN RECORD TIME

Like with any digital marketing skill, practice is the only way to improve your skills as a web analyst.

When you're a beginner, you have three options to get hands-on experience:

- **Create an analytics strategy for your own business.** If you already have a business, you can simply use what you've learned to grow it.

- **Find a business with an existing website** that's getting traffic, that will allow you to help them with web analytics and give you access to their website data (maybe this is a business you already work for, a friend's company, or a small business in the place where you live.)

- If you can't find an existing business to help, you can also **start your own website or blog** and try to get traffic—we don't recommend this route for beginner web analysts because it will take some time before you get any meaningful data to analyze.

Once you have this figured out, use the following framework:

1. Finish reading this guide, of course.

   Outcome: You will have a solid foundation of how web analytics fundamentally works—plus, the final section of this guide will help you avoid some common pitfalls for beginner web analysts.

2. Install Google Tag Manager. Check out this guide learn how to install Google Tag Manager on a Wordpress site.

   Outcome: You will be able to easily install the Google Analytics tracking code on any site and set up advanced events and conversions with the need to touch a line of code or hire a developer.

3. Install Google Analytics. Check out this guide to learn how to install Google Analytics tracking using Google Tag Manager.

   Outcome: Pretty obvious, right? You need Google Analytics to execute what you've learned on this guide.

4. Create a sales funnel measurement plan for the business. Check out the "Strategy" section of this chapter to learn how to do that (and get a simple measurement plan template.)

   Outcome: You will have a simple document that clearly outlines the most important goals, proxies, KPIs, and segments for the business. You will use this to simplify your analysis and focus on what truly moves the needle.

5. Implement the measurement plan. This walkthrough on setting up Google Analytics events and goals will help with that.

   Outcome: You will have set up your Google Analytics account to track exactly the metrics that matter for your business.

TRAPS: AVOID THESE WEB ANALYTICS TRAPS

Analytics is a difficult subject for many people and there is a lot of information out there for a beginner to digest.

This can lead to you making mistakes or spending a lot of time trying to understand stuff that aren't really helpful to you.

We've made a list of the most common traps for beginners—so you can avoid them.

Overly-Technical Advice

Many analytics experts love to get super technical—sometimes way too much so.

This is not meant with bad intentions. Many of the companies they deal with have very complicated systems in place that require obscure and highly technical implementations.

When you subscribe to a bunch of analytics newsletters, it's normal to feel overwhelmed by a lot of the content and afraid that you're messing something up.

However, if you're just getting started, it's better to just stick to the basics—you'll naturally learn more advanced stuff as the need arises.

Rule of thumb: If something is way too complicated for you to understand after reading this guide, it's probably too niche for you to worry about right now.

Vanity Metrics

This is a big one.

A lot of people tend to focus too much on metrics that make them feel good but that don't really have a meaningful impact in the business.

These are called vanity metrics.

Things like raw traffic, social shares, or number of pageviews are common vanity metrics.

That's one of the benefits of sticking to a measurement plan—to avoid vanity metrics and focus on metrics that matter.

Trying to Always do a Deep Dive into the Data

It's *very* easy to open up Google Analytics and go down a rabbit hole while trying to figure out why something happened.

This is fun and something we encourage doing—it's a great way to learn more about web analytics.

However, you should avoid doing this every time you look at the data.

In general, you should do regular checks (daily or weekly) on the metrics included in your measurement plan and do deep dives more sparingly (monthly or quarterly.)

This will allow you to discover trends and insights that cover more significant periods of time as opposed to getting stuck trying to figure out why a specific changed from one day to the next.

Thinking Your Business is Different and You Can't Use This Framework

People have emailed us saying this so often that we had to include it here.

It happens a lot with people trying to implement analytics for brick-and-mortar businesses (those that have a website), non-profits, or businesses that don't sell directly through a website (in-person coaching, consulting, medical, etc.)

As long as you plan on using your website to generate business results, you can use the framework explained on this guide.

- If you don't make sales through your site, then track another meaningful conversion like booking a consulting call, requesting a quote, or scheduling a meeting that does happen on your site.

- If you don't make sales at all, like non-profits, then you can track donations instead (it's pretty much the same principle.)

Don't get stuck because your specific case is "different". If you just use a little creativity, I'm pretty sure you can figure it out. :)

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