Content and Search Marketing

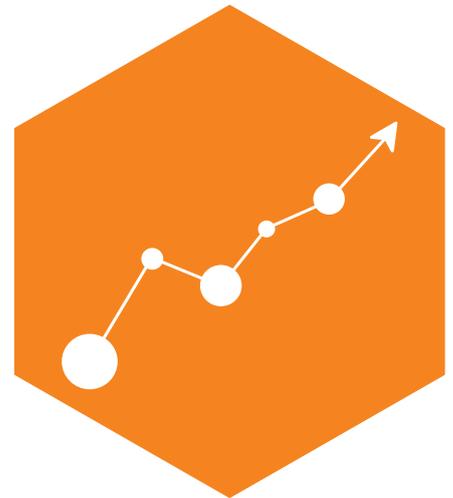# How marketing to technology companies has changed

How marketing to technology companies has changed

If you're reading this ebook, chances are you're either a marketing professional or a business owner who understands the importance of internet marketing today. You 'get' that promotional tactics need to evolve to ensure maximum ROI, but you are not sure how traditional methods and newer online activities such as SEO and social media can help you reach engineers and buyers in the engineering, electronics and design communities.

Whether your business is just getting started with internet marketing or you just want to brush up on the basics, this ebook can serve as your essential guide to setting up and implementing a successful internet marketing strategy.

From establishing your initial keyword strategy to leveraging social media to promote content online all the way through to analyzing and refining your strategies, this comprehensive guide will help you through every essential step you should be taking to effectively market your business, whether you're a software company, engineering business, power supply company - or indeed any company looking to target B2B technology companies.

Step One: Create a Keyword Strategy

If you wanted to boil Internet marketing down to a single starting point, keywords are it.

What is a Keyword?

A keyword is a word or phrase that a person enters into a search engine like Google and Bing or a social media site like Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn.

Why Build a Keyword Strategy?

More and more people are finding businesses online through search engines. In fact research shows that 93% of B2B purchases start with a search using specific, relevant keywords. Fortunately, you can take advantage of this habit by optimizing your website around the keywords that are relevant to your business and that engineers are using to find you online. This will increase your chances of getting found by people searching with those keywords, which will drive more and better quality traffic to your website.

While it's difficult to know exactly which keywords will get the most relevant people to find your business, there are ways to determine the popularity and competitiveness of certain keywords. You can also test and analyze how effective different keywords are in drawing visitors to your site.

As a business professional, you should make sure the right people are finding your business online. In this section, you will learn how to define keywords that will maximize your potential to draw in relevant traffic from search engines.

Keyword research is an ongoing process that should be followed closely. It gives valuable insight in terms of industry trends and product demand. Comprehensive keyword research can help a business grow its organic traffic and save you from spending money on pay-per-click (PPC) campaigns such as Google AdWords.

How to Create a Keyword Strategy

Create a list of 3-5 keywords relevant to your business.
Think like you're using the brain of someone searching for your product with a search engine. For small and medium-sized businesses, your keywords are not your brand name. Instead, think of words and short phrases that get to the core of what your product or service is about.

Choose keywords based on difficulty and relevance.
The keywords you choose should be based on difficulty and relevance.

Some very general words such as "windows" or "power" are very competitive, making it harder to rank well for them in search engine results. If you are a small or medium-sized engineering company, you probably want to choose less competitive keywords, more specifically related to your business (these are commonly referred to as long tail keywords). The greater the volume of searches on a keyword, the more competitive it is. There are a number of different tools you can use to determine the competitiveness of a specific keyword as well as suggest and help you brainstorm new keyword ideas. These tools include the Google Keyword Tool or HubSpot's Keywords feature in its software's Keyword Grader tool.

Another important factor for picking keywords is their relevance to your business. While some obscure terms might be easy to rank for, they might not be relevant to your business – think Christmas trees in January!

You should find a balance between relevance and difficulty. Choose about 5 keywords that match your business well.

Note that these keywords do not have to be perfect at first. You can try out different ones to see which work best for you. This will be discussed more in the 'Analyze & Refine Strategies' section (Step Eight).

Design and optimize your website around your keywords.
Now that you've chosen your keywords, you should incorporate them into your website. We will talk more about this in the upcoming section on website optimization (Step Two).

Step Two:
Optimize Your Website

Now that you've chosen your keywords, you can increase your website's chances of ranking for those keywords. Search engine optimization (SEO) is about doing just that!

In order to get found, you should aim to be on the first page or in the first few search engine results pages for your keywords.

Google (and all its 2012 algorithm updates) suggest that you design your website for visitors, and not for search engines. While you should keep this principle in mind, it is worthwhile to learn a bit more about SEO in order to better optimize your site.

What You Should Know About SEO

SEO can be divided into two separate categories: on-page SEO and off-page SEO. Most people are shocked to learn that on-site SEO is very limited in the overall scheme of things - indeed many companies refuse to accept this fact to begin with!

On-page SEO (20-30% of the influence) refers to how well your website's content is presented to search engines. This can often be improved immediately simply by changing the page title and removing reference to your company name, although Google's penguin update was meant to stop companies over optimizing.

Off-page SEO refers to your site's overall "authority" on the web, which is determined by what other websites say about your site. This can take time to improve.

Even though on-page SEO accounts for only about a quarter of how search engines score and rank your website, it's worth tackling first since it can be improved quickly.

Test Your SEO With WebsiteGrader.com

To find out how well optimized your website is, run it through HubSpot's free SEO tool, Marketing Grader. This tool will analyze your website and provide you with an overall score between 0 and 100. The higher the score, the more SEO-effective it is. These scores are based on a percentile scale, meaning that if you scored a 54, your website has scored better than 54% of the more than 3.5 million websites that Website Grader has analyzed. For on-page optimization, the most relevant part of this report is Part II: Optimize.

Do not be discouraged if your SEO score is a little low. If this is the case, you can probably get your website back in the game with only a little bit of work on your on-page SEO.

Nine Elements of On-Page Website Optimization

Before we start this list let's discuss what has absolutely no relevance at all. The thing about SEO is that the Google algorithm changes around 500 times a year and as such things that used to work really well at getting your pages ranked don't work at all anymore. The issue is many people still think they do. So in no particular order this is what DOESN'T work!

- **Meta keywords**
- **Gateway pages (not to be confused with landing pages)**
- **Keyword stuffing**
- **Keywords on the page the same colour as the background**
- **Blog networks**

So now we know what doesn't work we can continue with what does.

1. Page Title

Page titles are one of the most important on-page SEO factors. Page titles are the text you see at the top of your browser window when viewing a web page. They are also the title of a page that is presented in search engines.

Page titles can be found and edited in your site's HTML. The text that is surrounded with the <title> tag is your page's title.

The following are a few guidelines for coming up with effective page titles:
- Include keywords.
- Make it fewer than 70 characters long. Longer page titles will not be seen in your web browser or in Google search results. If you make the page title too long, it will also dilute the importance of the keywords mentioned.
- Put keywords as close to the beginning of the title as possible.
- Make it readable for site visitors.
- Include your company name at the end of the page title, unless you are a big brand and people search for you through your brand name.
- Use different page titles for each page. Each page is an opportunity to target different keywords.

2. Meta Description

Meta data is an often overlooked opportunity to attract visitors from search. Interestingly, it does not directly influence search engine rankings, but it is the 'call to action' to make people click on your listing rather than your competitor's. It is a good practice to include keywords in your meta description.

Meta data is the text seen as the description of a site in Google search. These words attract a searcher's attention and indicate if a search result is particularly relevant to the searcher. For this reason, including keywords in your meta description can draw in visitors, even though it does not affect search engine rankings.

The meta description is not something that is visible on your web page. The short summary of the web page, which is usually included at the top of the page's source code in a <meta description> tag is not used by the search engines for any SEO purposes. What the meta description is used for is to provide the searcher with a short description of the page (<150 characters to be exact) beneath each result. In fact, if a meta description is not included in the source code, then the search engine will usually display part of the content from the page in its place (a bad idea.). Since the meta description is not as well understood as other page elements, there are some very common mistakes people make when creating their websites.

3. Headings

If a piece of text appears larger or more prominent than the other text on a page, it's probably part of a heading. See "How SEO has changed and what you need to do about it" above. You can verify this by checking the HTML code of your website, and seeing if that text has an <h1>, <h2>, or <h3> tag surrounding it. Ask a developer to help you check this. Text in the headings is more likely to be read by search engines as keywords than text in the rest of the page.

For this reason, it is good to include keywords in your headings whenever possible. <h1> tags give the text more weight as keywords than <h2> tags, and <h2> tags have more weight than <h3> tags. While <h4> and <h5> tags do exist, their influence on keywords is virtually the same as that of regular text. Including too many headings dilutes the importance of keywords in other headings, so we recommend using the <h1> tag only once. If the page is text-heavy like a blog post, then feel free to throw in a few <h2> or <h3> tags as paragraph titles.

<h1>**Header**</h1>

<h2>**Sub**</h2>

<h3>**Sub**</h3>

4. Cascading Style Sheets (CSS)

HTML is the back-end code of your website that search engines read. Search engines extract relevant information from your HTML, such as keywords.

CSS, on the other hand, holds a template for the layout of your page. In the CSS, you define how headings, links, and other visual elements of the text should look.

The takeaway here is simple: use CSS. Putting layout-related information in your HTML can dilute the relevance of the HTML text, which is what you want search engines to read.

5. Images

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

- Don't use images excessively. More pictures means your page will take longer to load. This has a negative impact both on user experience and search engine optimization.
- Associate text with pictures. Search engines do not 'read' images; they read only text. ALT text is an HTML attribute you can add to your picture so search engines replace the image with with some associated text.
- Include keywords in your image file name. This will help you draw in relevant traffic from image searches. Separate different keywords in the file name with a dash (-).

6. Domain Info

Search engine rankings favour sites that are registered for a longer period of time. Longer domain registrations indicate a commitment to the site and mean the site has a lower chance of being considered to be spam. Unfortunately one of the 2012 updates reduced the impact of matching domains meaning that if, say, a semiconductor manufacturer had been prescient enough to register semiconductor. com then, historically, they would have seen some real benefit in search rankings. This SEO benefit was lost in 2012, although of course a good url that is very easy to remember can still have a lot of brand value.
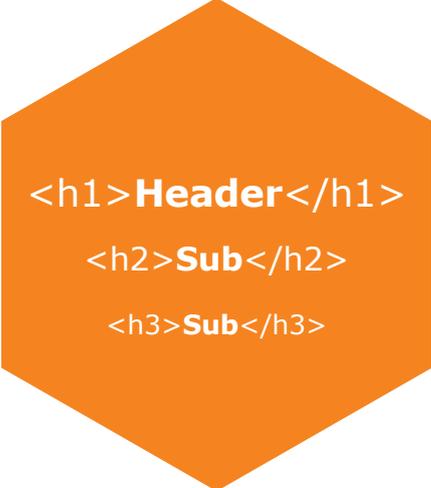
7. MOZ Rank

MOZ Rank is a general measure of how much online authority your site has. A higher MOZ rank is better. Note that MOZ Rank factors in both on-page and off-page SEO.

Improving your on-page SEO may help improve your rank, but there is much more you can do to improve it.

8. Google Crawl Date

When Google crawls your site, it updates the information related to it, such as your keywords and other SEO factors. Therefore, you want Google to crawl your site as often as possible.

The best thing you can do to make Google crawl your site more frequently is to regularly produce fresh content and publish it on your website. We'll cover this in more detail in Step Three.

9. URL Structure

The URL of a web page is its web address. For example, Pinnacle's blog has a URL of **http://www.pinnacle-marketing.com/blog**. The URL structure of a website is about how the different URLs connect with each other.

Unfortunately, improving your URL structure is one of the more difficult aspects of on-page website optimization. The methods of fixing these issues depend entirely on the back-end parts of your website, such as your content management system or programming framework. Nevertheless, if you have a competent developer by your side, having him or her tackle these issues can significantly improve your SEO. Your best approach might be to hand your developer the following list.

Principles of Good URL Structure:

- Apply a 301 redirect where required. A 301 redirect forwards an old URL to a new one after it changes. Make sure you do this if you change the URL of a page on your site. A common mistake is not applying a 301 redirect between yoursite. com and www.yoursite.com. This can be quite a problem from an SEO standpoint, because search engines will give separate credit to both versions of your site.
- Avoid pages with deeply nested URLs, as in the following example: http://yoursite. com/about/management/contact/phone. Deeply nested pages will get less SEO credit. You can fix this problem by improving your overall site design.
- Include keywords in your URLs. If you've already purchased your main URL, then don't worry about buying a new one just for this sake. But you can clean the URLs of your interior pages to include keywords and not look like gibberish.
- For your internal page URLs, separate individual keywords with dashes or underscores. For example:
  http://www.pinnacle-marketing.com/technology_pr_agency/
- Create static URLs, not dynamic ones. This means that the URL for one of your pages should be the same, no matter what. Check if you see different URLs for the same page in your website. If there are, you can look into how to create static URLs with your web server software. Do a Google search on "create static URL" + (name of your server software).

Avoid 'Keyword Stuffing'

After reading this, you might think, "Keywords are really important. If having keywords all over my page helps me rank for them, I should just fill my page with these keywords."

Unfortunately it's not that easy. It certainly was a few years back, but apart from leading to a bad experience for site visitors, search engines are smart enough to detect these behaviors. Trying to 'trick' search engines is not a good SEO strategy, and sacrificing readability for SEO is not a good idea either.

Improving Off-Page SEO With Inbound Links

So if on-page SEO accounts for 25% of your overall search engine ranking, what makes up the remaining 75%? As we mentioned before, off-page SEO is based on the authority of your website, or what other websites 'say' about yours. Simply put, websites with better or higher authority will rank better than websites with lower authority.

One of the main influencers on a website's authority is inbound links. If another website links to your website or a page on your website (like a blog article), that is called an inbound link. More inbound links is better, and more inbound links from website's with high authority themselves is even better than that (e.g. an inbound link from The New York Times website is much more valuable than an inbound link from a low-trafficked blog with a small readership).

So what's the best way to attract more inbound links (or 'link equity,' as we like to call it)? Through content creation! Creating valuable quality content that other websites will naturally want to link to in their own content is a great way to increase your website's inbound links. In addition, you can improve your chances of attracting inbound links by sharing your content in social media and optimizing it for search results so it can easily be found. We'll discuss content creation more in Step Three of this ebook and social media promotion in Step Four.
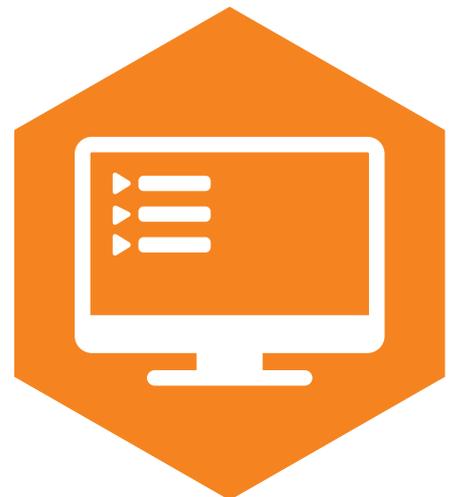
Step Three:
Create Blog & Other Content

Blogging platforms like WordPress and Blogger have made publishing content on the web easier than ever. Now that you have developed a clear understanding of your business' keywords and optimized your website for search engines, your next step should be to attract more visitors. Blogging and creating other content like ebooks and webinars are powerful ways to help more of the right people discover your business online.

How to Think About Business Blogging

When thinking about blogging, take off your hat as a business owner or marketing manager and instead try to think like a magazine publisher. The goal of your business blog should be to publish articles that are not promotional but instead share industry expertise, much in the way a column or an article in an industry magazine would.

Think about what you are writing and the words you are using. Don't use industry jargon that only you and your employees would understand. Just as you did when brainstorming keywords, think of the words your customers would use to describe your business and use those keywords in your blog posts. Section One of this ebook should serve as a helpful guide for the types of terms to include in your blog posts.

Getting Set Up With Blogging

While writing content that is interesting to your prospective customers is important, you first need a way to publish that content online. There are many paid and free tools available that provide a way to let you easily publish content online. When selecting a blogging platform, take a few things into consideration. The most important thing you can do when you first start blogging is to make sure your blog is a section of your business website. Without a blog, a website is kind of like a brochure that doesn't change often. A blog makes your website more dynamic by automatically injecting new content every time a blog article is published. Search engines reward higher rankings to websites that consistently add fresh content, and these higher rankings translate into new visitors and leads for your business.

Blogging Platforms to Consider

While it is important that your blogging software be easy to use, it is more important that the content you create be interesting. If you are looking for a blogging platform for your business, some options include WordPress, TypePad, Drupal, Posterous.

These platforms all offer a content management system (CMS) that allows you to easily add content to your blog, without needing to know any HTML code. This enables you to quickly update your site with industry news or other timely information, without having to wait for a webmaster to post your changes.

Key Components of a Great Blog Post

A well-constructed blog post should include several key components:

- **An Attention-Grabbing Article Title:** Because your blog article's title is the first thing people will see, it's important to make sure it clearly indicates what the article is about, is concise, keyword-rich (because the header tag is the most important for SEO), and attention grabbing.
- **Well Written & Formatted Text:** The body of your article should be well-written and formatted in a way that makes it easy to read. Consider using header tags and bulleted lists to break up the content into sections.
- **Images/Videos:** Relevant multimedia content can make a blog article more memorable and fun to read. It also helps to break up text to make it more pleasing to the eye.
- **Links:** Include in-text links to relevant content. These can also point to landing pages (which we'll discuss more in Step Five) to help you generate more leads for your content.
- **Call-to-Action:** Each and every blog article you publish should include a relevant call-to-action at the bottom of the article to help boost lead generation (again we will discuss this is more depth in Step Five of this ebook).

Deciding What to Blog About

Most business blogs start with a purpose. What are you trying to educate your industry and potential customers about? This education is not about your product, but instead about common industry issues and the problems your potential customers face and that your product or service helps to solve. A great way to start blogging is to think about the 10 most common questions you get asked by prospective new customers. Take each one of those questions and write a short article explaining an answer. Do this once a week for 10 weeks and you have the strong foundation for a successful blog. Once those first 10 weeks are over, check out this list of an additional 75 ideas to keep your business blog packed with interesting content. Remember to let your expertise and passion shine through your blog content and keep some of these business blog best practices in the back of your mind.

Convert Blog Visitors Into Leads

In Step Five, you will learn how to create landing pages and calls-to-action (CTAs) to help drive more potential customers for your business. It is important to remember that your business blog is an important platform to use these conversion opportunities. Create a call-to-action of some type at the end of each blog post. These CTAs work best if the offer is closely related to the subject matter of the blog post. Additionally, you can place image-based CTAs in the sidebar of your blog as a secondary way to convert more visitors into leads. These calls-to-action should link directly to a landing page that provides downloadable access to a more in-depth learning experience such as an ebook or webinar upon the completion of a lead generation form. We'll discuss CTAs and Landing Pages in more depth in Step Five.

Step Four: Promote Content & Participate in Social Media

Social media is generating a lot of buzz right now amongst marketers and business owners. Marketers who can leverage social media to help distribute business content and increase the overall community of advocates for their business can experience significant growth.

Social media allows your customers and potential customers to communicate directly with you and your employees online, and it allows interesting content to spread quickly.

While new social media tools launch every day, most businesses really only need to focus on the major players: Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

Monitoring Social Media

An important part of leveraging social media for business is to understand what conversations are happening online related to your industry and recognizing where you should respond. Here are some great tools you can use to easily monitor your business and industry mentions in social media:

- **Google Alerts:** Set up multiple Google Alerts for your company, brand, products, leaders, industry terms, etc. The alerts will get delivered directly to your email inbox at the frequency you indicate (e.g. daily or as they happen) and is a great way to help you track online mentions of your brand and relevant keywords.
- **Twitter:** Monitor mentions of your brand on Twitter with tools like Twitter Search or HootSuite. CoTweet is also a great tool to help manage multiple users on a corporate Twitter account and allows you to assign particular tweets to the appropriate team member for follow-up.
- **Google Reader and RSS Feeds:** Set up RSS feeds in Google Reader of searches for your brand or industry keywords in other popular social media sites such as Flickr, Digg and Delicious. Scan the results in your reader daily for mentions.
- **Facebook Insights:** Stay on top of and participate in discussions occurring on your company's Facebook Fan Page. Use your Fan Page's Facebook Insights Dashboard (found in the left sidebar when you're on your page as an admin) to show you stats such as fan growth and page views to gauge your page's interaction and engagement.

Getting Started With Twitter for Business

Twitter is a social network on which users share short, 140-character messages with each other. Users "follow" each other and can receive messages from each other via multiple devices. One of the key strengths of Twitter is that you can send a message to anyone. They may not respond but you can! If it's relevant and appropriate who knows what may happen. It is best to use Twitter's free search engine, Twitter Search to search for your business, competitors, and industry mentions on Twitter. Understanding how and if people are talking about your business and industry will give you enough information to determine if you should invest the time to start and manage a Twitter account for your business.
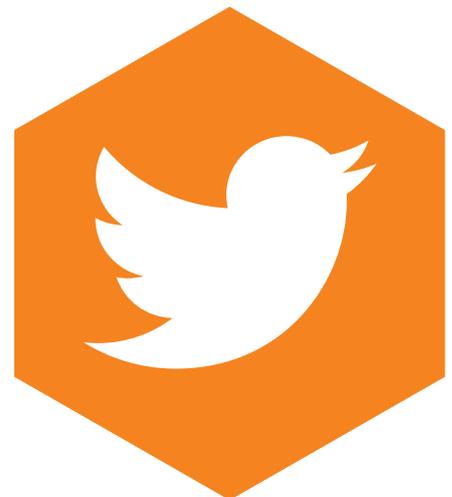
If you decide that Twitter is right for your business, you can visit Twitter.com to sign up for a free account. Here are a few tips for setting up a business Twitter account:

- Use the name of your business as your Twitter username.
- Use your business logo or a picture of the person managing the account as the profile image for the account.
- Create a custom Twitter background that provides additional information about your business.
- Use Advanced Twitter Search to help determine industry influencers and potential customers that your business should follow.

Using Facebook for Business

With more than a billion users, Facebook has become the major player in the social media industry. Facebook can serve as a powerful platform for building a community of advocates for your business to help increase word-of-mouth marketing. The first step in leveraging Facebook for business is to set up a business page. Watch this video for a step-by-step guide to creating a Facebook business page.

LinkedIn: The Social Network for Business Professionals

The social network business people may be most familiar with is LinkedIn. This network of over 200 million business users and more than 1 million business profile pages can be an important resource. To get started using LinkedIn for your business, it is best to set up and complete a personal profile for yourself as well as a company profile for your business. When setting up these profiles, remember to include all important information such as your website and blog URLs. Additionally, it is important to take the time to make the descriptions for you and your business interesting to read and an accurate reflection of your experience, knowledge, and passion. A recent addition has been to allow people who follow your business to see any updates that you publish as a business.

LinkedIn Groups

Once you have created profiles, LinkedIn has two major features that are of particular use to businesses and their employees. The first feature you should examine is the Groups feature. The Groups feature allows LinkedIn users to create and participate in discussions around a topic within LinkedIn. Groups can be a good way to make potential business connections, but can also be a great place to share relevant blog content.

LinkedIn Answers

The second feature, LinkedIn Answers, allows you to find people publicly stating they have a specific problem or need that your product or service would solve. Identifying these questions and responding with a resources or a blog article of yours that answers that person's need can offer a great marketing opportunity for your business. Ultimately, you can generate high-quality traffic to your blog from LinkedIn Answers, and get some really qualified leads as well.

Step Five:
Convert Site Traffic Into Leads

By step five, you should have already launched your blog, optimized your site for search engines, and started participating and promoting your content via social media. If it's been several weeks, by now you should start to see a spike in traffic to your website.

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

So what do you do? Simple. Focus on conversion. Focus on converting more of your website visitors into sales leads. To do this, decide on a compelling offer for your customers, create a call-to-action to promote your offer, and launch a landing page with a form for visitors to submit their information to obtain the offer. Finally, test, measure, and iterate the whole process.

Here's a guide to each step in this sales and marketing conversion funnel:

Step 1: Decide on Your Offer
The offer is the most important part of any campaign. It's the initial attraction that catches the attention of your website visitors and gives them a reason to fill out the form used to collect their information. Your offer should target the type of sales lead you're trying to attract. For example, if you're a golf instructor, you want to create offers that will appeal to golfers trying to improve their game. If you're a sales process consultant, you'll want to create offers that appeal to executives trying to improve their sales process.

Typical content offers include research reports, how-to ebooks (like this one!), slide downloads, or archived webinars. Other offers might include a free trial or demo of your product or a personal consultation. Of course, there's no reason to be constrained by what's typical. Use anything you think will work for your target customers. (Also keep in mind that the offer form is a conversation starter for the sales team, so it should be designed to start a conversation that will lead to a sale.)

Step 2: Create Calls-to-Action
Once you decide on your offer, create a few compelling CTAs. As we alluded to in Step Three of this ebook, a call-to-action is a button or a link on a website that grabs a user's attention and directs that user to a landing page. On the landing page, the user is prompted to complete a form and submit contact information in order to receive what's being offered. By submitting that information, the visitor is then converted into a lead with whom your sales team can follow up. Your call-to-action can be text, an image, or html, but it should always include a link to the corresponding landing page. If you have an effective call-to-action, you'll convert a high percentage of your website visitors into leads.

Website Visitors

The Conversion Funnel Process

- Create an Offer
- Build a Call To Action
- Build a Landing Page
- Measure, Test, Iterate

Customers
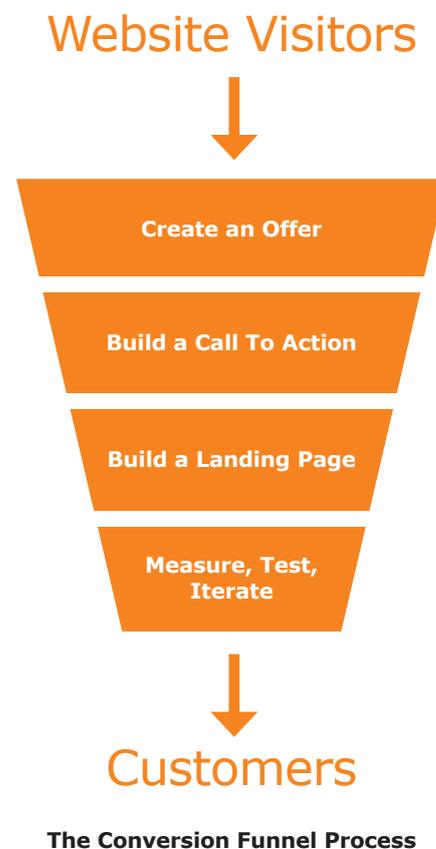
Step 3: Create Landing Pages

After you create a call-to-action, you need to set up the landing page that it will link to. The landing page is the page where your website visitors arrive after they click on your call-to-action, and where they will fill out the form to receive your offer.

You'd be surprised by how many times we've seen calls-to-action that aren't links. Whether intentional or a matter of forgetfulness, the lack of a link will make it much harder for visitors to find out how to receive the offer, and they'll likely give up. So double, triple, and quadruple check to make sure all of your CTAs link to their corresponding landing pages.

As we said, landing pages house the form where users submit information that allows them to access your offer. The information you collect will also be used by you or your sales team to follow up with them. Once users submit their information on the landing page, they should be redirected to a thank-you page where they can access the offer.

Be crystal clear about what the offer is in your CTA. And be specific. If you're giving away a free guide, say "Download our FREE guide to X." If you're hosting a free webinar, say "Register for our FREE webinar on X." X should clearly convey a compelling benefit of receiving the offer. This is much more effective than "Download Now" or "Get a Free Article." These simply aren't specific enough.

Step 4: Test, Measure & Iterate

Offers, calls-to-action and landing pages are the core elements of the conversion process, but you can't stop there. If you just have a single conversion pathway, you have very little insight into the process and the way it performs. In order to improve your conversion process, you need to experiment. You need to test different CTAs, different landing pages and different offers, and then you need to decide which ones best help you achieve your goals.

After a CTA has been on your homepage for a month, vary the messaging or swap out an entirely new CTA, and after another month, measure which has performed best. If landing page conversions are low, move the form above the fold and measure the results. Don't be afraid to test different variations; you can always switch back if the old version worked better. It will be worth it when you've found the best combination that increases your site's conversions.

Step Six: Nurture Leads With Email Marketing

According to MarketingSherpa, 70% of your leads will end up buying something from you or one of your competitors, but they won't do it right away! Companies that build relationships with their leads over time have the greatest success in turning leads into customers by staying top-of-mind until the lead is ready to buy.

Lead nurturing is the process of developing that relationship with your potential customer by sending targeted, relevant, and valuable messages to them in a timely manner. The end goal is to get your leads to "raise their hand" and self-select into further engaging with your business. Forrester Research found that companies that excel at lead nurturing are able to generate 50% more sales-ready leads at 33% lower cost-per-lead.

Email Marketing Best Practices:

List-Building

- Create opt-in opportunities. Make sure your lead forms allow your website visitors to enter their email address and opt-in to receive your messages.
- Give people a reason to opt-in. Whether it's a landing page for an ebook or an email newsletter subscription form, make sure you give people a compelling reason to opt-in. What's so valuable about your ebook? What interesting and unique information will they receive in your email newsletter? Be explicit and phrase the benefit(s) in terms of your recipient.
- Would I be upset if I didn't receive your message? Only send messages to people who have explicitly opted in. You can follow the extreme principle of Seth Godin's Permission Marketing: Would your recipient be upset if they didn't receive your message? If yes, you should go ahead and send your email.

Sending

- Stay relevant. What was your lead interested in? Did they download your "5 Tips for Using QuickBooks to Manage Your Business" ebook? Or did they read your blog article on "How to Get Your Business Listed in Google Places"? Send them an email with more resources targeted to their interests.
- Get personal. Use a name and email address in the "from" line of your email that your recipients will recognize. Personalize the message so the recipient remembers how and why they came to your website. For example, start with "You recently checked out our ebook…" or "Thanks for subscribing to our blog!"
- WIIFM? At the end of the day, make sure that your message adds value. Get into the mind of your recipient and ask, "What's In It For Me?" (WIIFM) Are you emailing them just to tell them how great your product is? Or are you offering to help solve a problem they're facing? Make the value clear in both the email body and the subject line.
- Don't rely on images. Many email clients don't load images automatically, so if your email is one large image, your recipient won't have any idea what it's about. Use images as supplementary (clickable) content in your email, and make sure you have enough text to communicate value.
- Be consistent. You want your recipients to expect and look forward to your messages. Whether you send your messages daily, weekly, or monthly, pick a schedule and stick to it.
- Don't let the law get you down. Brush up on CAN-SPAM regulations to make sure your email practices comply.

Converting

- What do I do here? When someone opens your email, make it clear what they're supposed to do. Is it to click to read a blog article? Download a new, free ebook? Include a call-to-action that links to a landing page where the recipient can convert again and self-select to further engage with you.
- The landing page is part of your email campaign. Email marketing doesn't stop with a click. Your landing page is an extension of your email, and it is where your conversion takes place. Make sure your email offer and landing page flow, and review Step Five of this ebook for tips on conversion opportunities and landing page best practices.

Measuring

- Click-Through Rate (CTR) measures response. Of the people you emailed, how many of them clicked through to your landing page? The CTR can give you a sense of how compelling your offer and email messages are. Experiment with different subject lines, calls-to-action, and timing to improve the CTR of your emails.
- What about open rate? Open rate is an increasingly unreliable metric, as more email clients do not load the images necessary for tracking who opened an email. Focus instead on how many clicks your email received.
- Unsubscribe rate measures annoyance and spam. There will always be some people who do not want to receive your emails anymore, but you want to make sure your unsubscribe rate does not exceed 5%. If your unsubscribe rate gets this high, check on your opt-in policies and procedures to make sure you're only emailing subscribers who want to receive your messages.
- Conversion rate measures actions. The final step is conversion, so measure how many of those clicks turned into conversions on your landing page. Test different landing pages to improve the conversion on your website.

Lead nurturing is all about developing relationships with your leads, so keep in mind that this does not have to be limited to email communication. Think about how you can communicate with your leads via social media or another platform they use.

Step Seven:
Be Mobile-Friendly

It's obvious that mobile platforms are becoming more and more of a consideration when it comes to internet marketing. If you are trying to market on the mobile web, you need to consider the importance of creating entertaining and quality content that can be easily consumed on mobile devices such as smartphones or tablet computers. This means remove flash from your website!

Optimize for Mobile

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

While developing a mobile application relevant to your business is another option, most businesses are still just ramping up their internet marketing efforts and do not have enough content to support a mobile application. Additionally, many marketers would be better off optimizing their SEO, email, lead nurturing, and social media campaigns for maximum lead generation before taking on yet another major project such as a mobile application.

For those internet marketers just getting started with mobile, the important thing to focus on is making sure your website is easy to view and navigate when accessed on mobile devices.

What should you worry about when optimizing for mobile?

1. Emails & Calls-to-Action
It is important that you optimize your website and emails to be viewed correctly on mobile devices, such as the iPhone and Android-powered devices. Additionally, it will be important to think about how your calls-to-action and offers work on mobile devices.

2. Downloads
Is it easy for a prospect to fill out a form on your website from their smartphone? If you are offering a download, will it open on mobile devices?

3. Video
Bytemobile found that in 2011, 60 percent of all traffic on mobile web devices was for video. The study also showed that 10 percent of mobile web users account for 90 percent of mobile web traffic. This staggering statistic means that a relatively small group of mobile internet users are responsible for the vast majority of mobile bandwidth consumption.

This data highlights some critical elements in the evolution of the mobile web. With indications that mobile bandwidth cost may be on the rise, it is important for marketers to develop lightweight ways to engage mobile users. Don't ask a user to stream a 10-minute video. Instead, provide a clean text summary of the video if they are using a cellular data connection. Give them an opportunity to watch the video if they are on a WiFi connection, in an effort to help them conserve mobile bandwidth.

Step Eight:
Analyze & Refine Strategies

Now that you have all the right internet marketing strategies in place, it's time to make all of them as efficient as they can be. Your main goal in this step is to find the best way to use all the techniques we've already discussed to get found online and generate new customers.

5 Steps for Analyzing & Refining Internet Marketing Strategies

1. Implement an Analytics Program

In order to analyze, you need to have an analytics program in place. Google Analytics is a free tool that helps analyze your website traffic. Recently the information it gives you has been slightly reduced if the user is logged into Google, but if you measure landing page traffic you can overcome this.

2. Identify Opportunities

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

3. Set a Metric for Success

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

4. Refine

Analyze how your programs performed and make changes with the aim of achieving your marketing goals by doing less of what doesn't work and more of what works (and by modifying what doesn't work so that it works better).

5. Evaluate

Determine if you've met your success metric. If so, stick with your change. See what you could have done differently. Continue to monitor it to make sure the improvement has a long-term effect.

Metrics to Analyze

In order for your refinements to have a big impact, you need to monitor several key factors. Again, you'll need analytics software to do this.

Before diving into how to improve them, let's first discuss what the relevant metrics are. This is just a minimal list of what you should be monitoring. We could always discuss more

Website Grade: How well optimized is your website overall? To find out, continue running your website through Website Grader..

Traffic: Overall, how many people are coming to your website?

Leads: How much of this traffic are you converting into leads (e.g. potential customers)?

Customers: How many sales did you close this month?

Customer Acquisition Cost: How much are you investing to draw in each new customer?

New vs. Repeat Visitors: Of your overall traffic, how many visitors are returning to your site, and how many new people are finding you? Both types of visitors are good. Attracting new visitors means people are finding you through search. Attracting repeat visitors means you've given people good reason to come back to your site. The key is finding a balance.

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

Traffic by Keywords: Which keywords are drawing in the most visitors to your site?

Steps for Improvement

While you should try to reach long-term goals, there are some short-term steps you should take to get there. The following are some elements of your website you can refine so you can reach your broader goals:

Keywords: Try new keywords or long tail keywords to see if they help you get found better. Since each page on your site can incorporate different keywords, there are tons of ways to do this.

On-Page SEO: See if changing a simple on-page factor can help boost visits. Examples of on-page factors are page title, meta description, and headings. As a simple test, try changing the page title of one of your web pages to see if you generate more traffic.

Conversions: Try new things with your conversion forms or landing pages. For example, try making the conversion form more prominently located on your web page.

Content Strategy: Determine which content is generating the most traffic. This could be an opportunity to either focus more on that kind of content, or refine your delivery of other content.

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

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

Conclusion

For starters, the concept of internet marketing might seem difficult and daunting. But by tackling each internet marketing tactic step by step, businesses can make internet marketing more manageable and start generating results. By reading this ebook, we hope you've gained an understanding of how internet marketing can improve your overall marketing plan and help you achieve business growth.

Of course we would be more than happy to discuss any of these items with you and manage the whole process should you so desire.

For more information, or to see examples of our work, please visit **publitek.com** or get in touch:

UK
+44 (0) 1582 390980
europe@publitek.com

Germany
+49 (0) 4181 968 0980
europe@publitek.com

North America
+1 503 546 1002
usa@publitek.com

Japan
+81 90 4376 0123
apac@publitek.com

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