DIGITAL BOOST

power up your business

DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY GUIDE

Intermediate Level

Digital Scotland

business gateway
your gateway to business expertise

TABLE OF CONTENTS

B efore reading this guide, you should already have in place a defined digital marketing strategy with focused aims and objectives.

This intermediate guide to digital marketing strategy will focus on guiding you on how to optimise and improve your digital marketing by taking a more strategic view, with the ultimate aim of growing and advancing your business.

If you are just starting out, we recommend you first check out our Basic Guide to Digital Marketing Strategy, even if you would just like a recap on the outline of how your strategy should be set out from a top line perspective.

OPTIMISING YOUR DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY

GOAL HIERARCHY – BUSINESS OBJECTIVES, MARKETING OBJECTIVES AND KPIS

You should know your overall main business driver – whether that is to increase sales, gain market share, or business expansion. By this stage you should also know the difference between macro and micro conversions, and how the two are both important on their own, but at the same time intrinsically linked. One cannot exist without the other.

And then you have the overarching objective of what your business is trying to achieve in this world – your company mission.

But how do we link them all together?

DIGITALBOOST
power up your business

COMPANY MISSION

BUSINESS OBJECTIVES

Increase market
share, increase sales,
new product introduction,
new market expansion

MARKETING OBJECTIVES

Macro conversions – product
order completion, subscription sign up,
application form completion, sign up,
contact form completion, phone call

MARKETING KPIS

Micro conversions – ad click throughs, downloads,
social action, email newsletter, call back request,
time spent on site, entering check out process

Importantly, *we cannot set up objectives quickly and continue on the assumption that they will be meaningful guides to action.*

A hierarchical goal breakdown structure links your higher-level objectives to more detailed day-to-day goals.

When properly thought of, developed and applied, objectives can tell you in what direction all marketing and wider business activities should be moving. They can in equal part guide day-to-day activities and the personal development of individuals in an organisation; and direct better planning, in terms of what you should be doing, and how much.

DIGITALBOOST
power up your business

The Harvard Business Review provides a useful list of what objectives should be.

OBJECTIVES...

- Need not begin with the broad grand design of the organisation, but all objectives in the hierarchy should be consistent with it
- Should make your employees reach and aim to be better
- Should be realistic in terms of the internal resources of the organisation and the external opportunities, threats and constraints
- Should take into account the creative conception of a range of alternatives and the relative effectiveness and cost of each
- Should be known to each employee so they understand the goals and how they relate to the broader objectives of the whole business
- Should be periodically reconsidered and redefined, not only to take account of changing conditions, but for the salutary effect of rethinking the aims of organisational activities

Starting from the top of the pyramid visual, this section is more relevant for management and business owners. Say your business objective was to increase sales by 20%. Then your marketing objective would have been the volume of sales that would have enabled this 20% increase.

In the middle step, we need to establish and confirm the correlation between the micro and macro conversions, and report on the overall marketing objectives.

At the lower end, *as marketers we need to measure our marketing KPIs, our indicators along the way that tell us if our marketing strategy is actually working*, and show how our micro conversions positively (or negatively) affect the previous steps further up the pyramid.

You should look to analyse your last marketing activity according to this hierarchy. Some of the key questions to ask would be:

- Did your marketing strategy meet the overall objective?
- If not, why not?
- If yes, what was it about the campaign that succeeded?
- Can you replicate that tactic to increase sales further?

DIGITALBOOST
power up your business

Perhaps the overarching question might be "what more can I do?"

The sections to follow will aim to give you the "more" that you might need to do to meet and exceed those business objectives. We will detail some in-depth ways for you to identify your your target audience(s), focusing on what content converts them, competitor benchmarking and analysis.

The guide will also look at ways to expand your digital strategy beyond the sale, for example establishing your brand foundations to encourage customer advocacy and loyalty by using CRM, Email, Loyalty Programs and Social Media, before establishing your best practices to optimise and measure performance along the way using data analytics.

When moving forward, consider HBR's "objective checklist" to ensure all objectives and subsequent marketing activities are all aligned.

MARKET ANALYSIS

M ove beyond the basics covered in SWOT and PESTEL analyses to really understand your market and your target audience. Perhaps up to this point you know the broad insights of your primary target market – their age range, their likes and dislikes, or what kind of pages and brands they follow on social media. However by moving beyond this and developing more in-depth market insights, you will be able to better select your digital marketing mix and push budget to the most relevant marketing channels.

More extensive market analysis can be a time-consuming process, but it is one that can be well worth it when you can develop a more in-depth understanding and knowledge of who it is that you actually intend to target.

And after all, *should you expect your customers to convert on your marketing activities if you don't do everything you can to really understand their problems and how to solve them?*

SECTION 2A
AUDIENCE PERSONAS

WHAT ARE AUDIENCE PERSONAS?

Audience personas are fictional, generalised representations of your ideal customers. Since personas allow you to view your product or service from their perspective, *building personas for your key target audience can help improve the way you solve problems for your customers.*

WHAT MAKES A GOOD PERSONA?

The best personas are built on actual research and surveys and interviews of your target audience, but this approach does take time, money and resources and might not be readily available to all businesses. You can gain excellent insight from even small-scale research by pulling together a small focus group or interviewing a few key clients. And if this is still not possible don't be afraid of taking a fictional approach! Just ensure you are as accurate as possible when creating them – use information that you know to be true about your consumers from any previous research, from your web analytics or from past email queries you have had.

WHY DEVELOP AUDIENCE PERSONAS?

Audience personas allow you to be more strategic with your digital marketing tactics and execution by allowing you to tailor messages to your key audience any by undertaking your marketing communications primarily with them in mind.

If you are starting out with audience personas, you should *start with 2-3 and build out from there if you feel you need more –* larger businesses could have as many as 15-20.

DIGITALBOOST
power up your business

AUDIENCE PERSONA TEMPLATE

There are many audience persona templates available online that will largely cover the same information, just with slightly different layouts. The list below covers the general areas that will be included in most templates. *The more you can answer or even if you can add more sections yourself specific to your business, the more beneficial it will be to your digital strategy*, which becomes much more targeted and tailored based on your audience persona research.

SECTION 1: WHO?

- Background:
  - Job
  - Career path
  - Marital status
- Demographics
  - Gender
  - Typical age
  - Location
  - Income bracket

SECTION 2: WHAT?

- Goals:
  - Primary goal
  - Secondary goal
- Challenges and Concerns
  - Primary challenge/concern
  - Secondary challenge/concern
- What can you do:
  - To help achieve their goal
  - To overcome their challenges or alleviate their concerns

SECTION 3: WHY?

- Real Quotes:
  - About goals, challenges etc. – "I am a mother with 2 young children.
  I want to learn a new language but I struggle to find the time. I need a flexible solution to learning that will allow me to balance my work and family life."
- Common objections:
  - Why wouldn't this person by your product/service?

SECTION 4: HOW?

- Marketing Messaging:
  - Describe your solution to the persona directly and succinctly – "Flexible at home language tuition."
- Elevator Pitch
  - Sell your persona on your solution to their situation – "We provide you with the ultimate flexibility that fits in with your schedule, however much or little time you have, we have a course option that fits your needs."

Taking your newfound insight from theory and practice always seems like a big
step. But with greater insight your problem is likely to be choosing which door
to run through first!

AUDIENCE PERSONAS IN PRACTICE

In practice, one of the most straightforward implementations of personas in your marketing strategy would be in Email and Social Media Ads.
For example, instead of sending the same blanket email to your entire database, you can segment by audience persona and tailor email content based on what you know about that persona.

Similarly with social ads, where your character length and image specifications are limited or restricted, making sure that ad is spot on for a specific persona will increase click-through-rate from highly qualified prospects who are more likely to convert on your marketing objective.

DIGITALBOOST
power up your business

CUSTOMER SEGMENTATION AND ANALYSIS – CONVERTING CONTENT

Using your audience persona knowledge, the next step would be taking this information forward and starting to categorically answer questions like:

- What do they want from you? What are their needs?
- What do you want them to do? What are your goals onsite?
- What content would likely give them what they need and convince them to do what you want them to? What will convert that customer?
- What does success look like? What are your marketing KPIs?

Similar to your persona research, it is likely you will have several customer segments with their own unique profile and needs/desires. The exercise below should be completed for each key customer segment:

Audience Category	Target Market Segment	Profile	Their Needs	Your Onsite Goals	Converting Content	KPIs
Are they an individual person, a large/small organisation, start up, community group/third sector, public/private sector	If the audience category is "Individual", are they a student, young/established professional, younger/older generation	What distinguishing characteristics sets each target market segment apart; what is it about them that makes them unique?	What are they looking for from your site?	Based on their needs, what would be the goals onsite that they would be useful to them?	What kind of content would actually achieve the completion of that goal? [Consider content types]	Micro and macro conversions

The more that is known about your audience, the more targeted and customised you can be with your messaging and communication to different audience segments.

This will then give you your 'arsenal' of converting content – *it will highlight any new content that you need to create and the content that you need to prominently display on your site and push out on your digital marketing channels.*

DIGITALBOOST
power up your business

COMPETITOR BENCHMARK AND ANALYSIS

The benefits of conducting competitor benchmark analysis are obvious. You don't want to miss something your competitors are doing that might be a threat to your business and that might steal traffic and conversions from you.

There will be some key learnings that you can take. What are they doing well that you can replicate? For example do they have an engaged social audience? If so, what are they doing that is engaging users? Or is their site easy to use – are they displaying content and information in a simpler way than you?

And the best thing is that in this digital age this is not as difficult a task as it used to be! With a simple search on a competitor's business you can uncover information that is published, public, available and free.

You will be able to uncover:
- Annual reports (depending on company size)
- Company profiles
- Product brochures
- Press releases
- Published media articles
- Customer reviews
- Social media platforms
- Their website
- Any PPC activity
- Key search terms they are ranking well for on search engines

Your first step in any competitor analysis would be starting as if you were a potential customer, and run a few test searches using popular or common keywords (not including brand terms). What is the industry/market leader doing that is different? Who appears top of the search engine rankings, and who appears first in the paid positions? Also, spend time browsing competitor websites; do you get retargeted with ads after leaving their site? Helpfully, this activity is all free and will give you an indication of who is spending money on paid channels.

Consider that those who appear in these places might not necessarily be your direct competition but nevertheless they are still trying to steal traffic from you. *Searching for key terms and phrases related to your business should be a regular practice to keep on top of any new competitors or new alternatives/substitutes for your product or service.*

One of the main stumbling blocks to finding out all the information you need to make informed decisions is not knowing what tools and resources are out there at your disposal. From tracking competitor search ranking positions through Moz or Positionly, tracking social share of voice with Sysomos, or just simply keeping watch on what other companies are posting on Facebook and Twitter, there are more and more free, trial-based or paid (from cheap to pricey!) services these days.

Throughout this process, most importantly, don't overlook your own efforts. Is your business visible during your searches for competitors? How do your activities match up?

Remember that benchmarking should be an on-going process, not a task that you do only once. Equally, when you complete your analysis, make sure your time and effort doesn't sit on the shelf. Link your insight to action and review progress and performance through your KPIs and data analytics.

WHERE ARE YOU NOW – ANALYSE YOUR DIGITAL ASSETS

It is important not to get too hung up on what your competitors are doing, it's all about how you take the insights gathered and implement them into your own strategy that will be the more critical move going forward. Your competitors might be doing things better than you, but that should just serve as inspiration and incentive to get to where they are, and indeed to surpass them.

And now you have a much clearer view of your target market and your competitors, how does your current digital offering stack up in comparison? What digital assets are you currently utilising, and how well? Which channels are you not using that you could be? Where will your new, converting content be most valuable?

In analysing your own digital assets, it is useful to group them into the Paid, Earned and Owned categories.

- Paid media is when you pay to advertise on a third party channel
- Earned media is when users (not necessarily just your target audience) share your content, spread word-of-mouth and generally discuss your brand, products or services. These mentions are "earned", either negatively or positively, meaning they are voluntarily given by others
- Owned media is an asset or platform that you own, create and control. Typical owned assets would be your brand website or blog. Social media channels – YouTube, Facebook, Twitter – although strictly you do not "own" these platforms and you are subject to any changes as much as the next business, you do control them and don't have to pay for basic

Today, digital marketing is not a single channel game. The marketing landscape is too vast, and your consumers too dynamic, to consider a single channel or activity.

The most important takeout here is that by applying the Paid, Earned and Owned categories to your marketing activity ensures a well-balanced marketing mix.

Focus on creating a holistic strategy that encompasses all three categories through the creation of useful, engaging, customer-focused content. Host this content on owned channels, promote your best problem-solving solutions through paid media and in the longer term, earn your target audiences trust and loyalty.

This earned media state is the hardest to achieve, as obviously you cannot force users into sharing and commenting on your content. *It takes time, and it takes hard work to really know what makes your customers tick.* But the rewards are obvious when your own customers become brand advocates.

We have listed the common assets that would fall under each heading below. How do you fare in comparison to competitors on each channel?

Paid	Earned	Owned
Social media ads	Organic search	Brand website – desktop
PPC (Adwords)	Reviews	Brand website – mobile
Display	Shares	Mobile apps
Content promotion	Reposts	Facebook
Native ads/paid content	Mentions	Twitter
Paid influencers		Instagram

In analysing your own assets, you would first need an indication of what "success" in your industry looks like.

From your own viewpoint, look at your web analytics to see how users consume your owned content – use Google Analytics (or other web analytics platforms) for your website or mobile app, or Facebook Insights for social post performance.

DIGITALBOOST
power up your business

On social media, is your content being shared? Are the competitions? Keep track of your engagement rate, remembering that a large volume of activity doesn't automatically mean your content is engaging if you have a large number of followers or fans – your follower number should never be a key performance indicator.

Don't be concerned or disheartened if your assets do not look to be performing at first impressions. This will give you a starting point when looking at creating content and on what channels this content should focus on moving forward.

DIGITALBOOST
power up your business

STRATEGY AND TACTICS TO IMPROVE DIGITAL MARKETING ACTIVITY – CONTENT STRATEGY

Now you have a better indication of where your marketing activities and assets stand in the grand scheme, now you need to look at driving more traffic and push your content out there.

You should have an idea of what content performs or not on your site; what kind of social updates generate good engagement rates; what you need to do to compete with your competitors; and, any improvements that you need to make to your assets, that will guide your content strategy.

WHAT IS CONTENT MARKETING?

Content Marketing is the practice of creating and sharing high quality, engaging and relevant content in order to attract, engage and convert visitors.
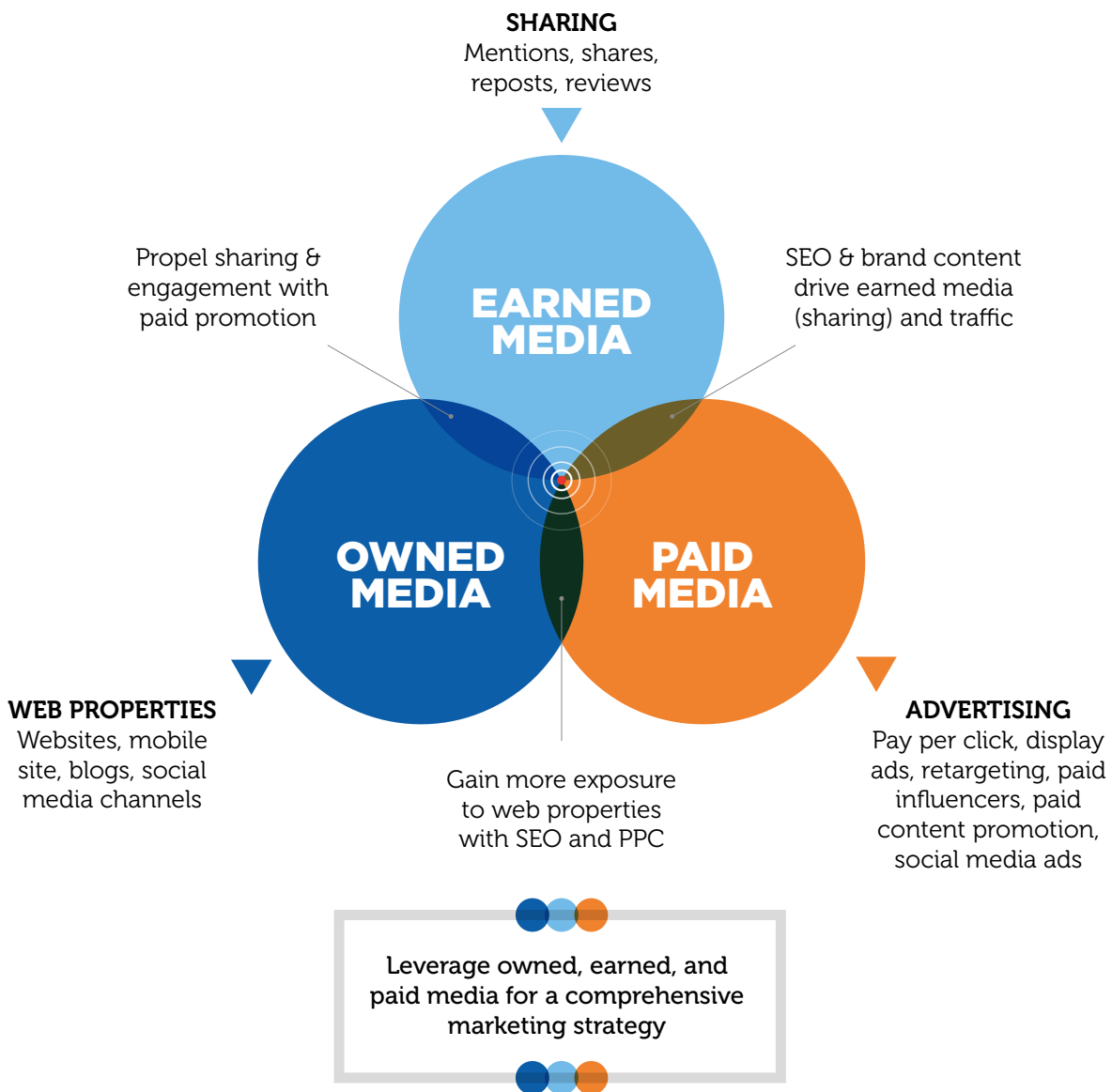
It is the conversation between your brand and your customers through stories. It's about building long-lasting relationships to current and potential customers, by providing valuable content with the aim to build trust, awareness and engagement through various channels in the digital marketing mix.

In today's hyper-connected digital landscape, you need to talk with customers, not to them. And you need to provide high quality, relevant and engaging content to do this.

DIGITALBOOST
power up your business

PAID, EARNED AND OWNED MODEL

In the previous section we introduced the Paid, Earned and Owned model, which can be very useful in defining your content marketing strategy.

When visualising this model, each overlap presents an opportunity to boost your marketing strategy through a specific marketing tactic:

SHARING
Mentions, shares, reposts, reviews

Propel sharing & engagement with paid promotion

SEO & brand content drive earned media (sharing) and traffic

EARNED MEDIA

OWNED MEDIA

PAID MEDIA

WEB PROPERTIES
Websites, mobile site, blogs, social media channels

ADVERTISING
Pay per click, display ads, retargeting, paid influencers, paid content promotion, social media ads

Gain more exposure to web properties with SEO and PPC

Leverage owned, earned, and paid media for a comprehensive marketing strategy

The intersection of all assets is essentially the ideal – the balanced marketing strategy that leverages paid, earned and owned media in equal measure.

**DIGITALBOOST**
power up your business

For example, a content strategy that overly depends on Adwords PPC and Display Ads to drive traffic would most likely see poorer performance onsite in terms of bounce rate or time spent on site. Organic traffic can balance this, i.e. site visitors who naturally made their way to your site through a relevant search query or interest. But to generate this organic traffic channel, SEO tactics are required.

Similarly, an over reliance on free-to-post social channels like Facebook and Twitter might get good interactions with a portion of your target audience, but this interaction might be constantly with the same segment, which does not push your communications out to wider audiences, as such the % of new visitors on the site could be very low, an problem if you have a one-time only product for example.

REACH, ACT, CONVERT AND ENGAGE WITH YOUR CUSTOMERS

This guide to digital strategy aims to get you thinking about how to improve your marketing strategy by considering further activity, channels and platforms to push your strategy into a more advanced stage.

The number of options available to you might seem a bit overwhelming, and often there is an element of clarity or simplification required. The RACE Planning Framework by Smart Insights is a useful, simplified outline that helps you to focus on some of the applicable marketing activities at various stages of the traditional marketing funnel that will make your digital marketing strategy a success and achieve your goals:
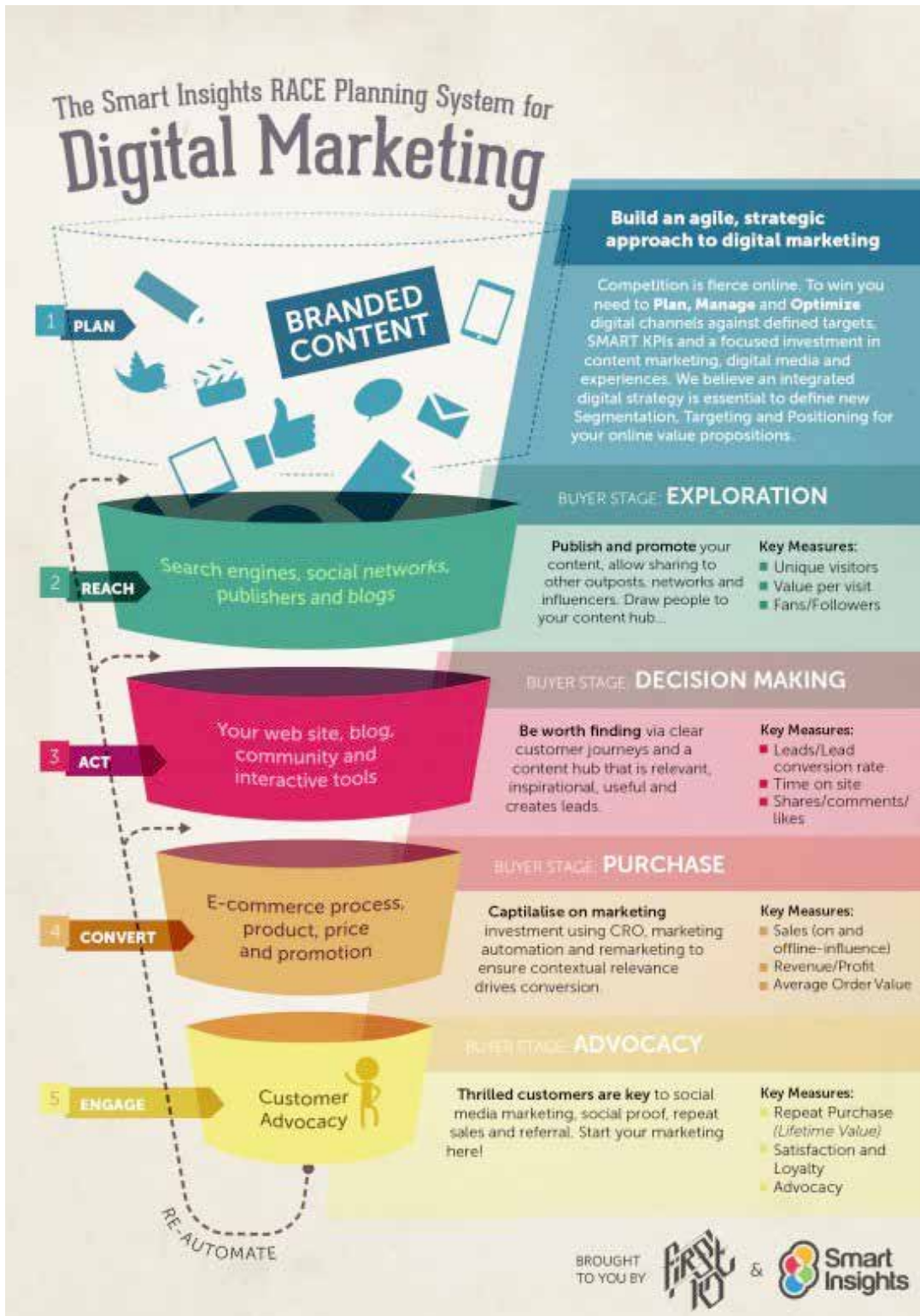
We have broken down the framework further below, working through from top of the funnel to the bottom, highlighting the appropriate strategic approach to take at each stage and summarising the relevant tactics to consider in your digital marketing strategy.

REACH Acquisition strategy to build awareness

- Relevant tactics/approaches in your marketing strategy:
    - SEO
    - PPC
    - Affiliates and partnerships
    - Online/display ads
    - PR
    - Social media marketing

ACT & CONVERT Persuade visitors to interact and meet one of your conversion goals by connecting them with useful, engaging and relevant content

- Relevant tactics/approaches in your marketing strategy:
    - Content strategy
    - Conversion rate optimisation
    - Lead generation
    - Homepage/landing page optimisation
    - A/B testing

ENGAGE Retention and growth strategy to build customer relationships into repeat visits and sales and brand loyalty

- Relevant tactics/approaches in your marketing strategy:
    - Content strategy
    - Email strategy – newsletters, promotional emails
    - Mobile strategy

At this stage, you should now be able to start taking a more in-depth approach to your marketing activities, starting with your goal hierarchy and analysing your own objectives. *Use deeper insights into your target audience and competition, and consider your key pieces of converting content – the content that will drive traffic to your site and various platforms to raise awareness and drive conversions.*

Smart Insights RACE framework is an easy one to remember to simplify that strategy, but always ensure a balanced approach of utilising all areas of the Paid, Earned and Owned model for optimal performance.

DIGITALBOOST
power up your business

MEASUREMENT

At this stage there is likely now more arms and legs to your digital marketing strategy than before. And with *more activity* and more knowledge into what makes your customers tick, *places a greater emphasis on ensuring best practices are not just established, but followed throughout to ensure your marketing strategy is optimised and ultimately successful in meeting your business objectives.*

In our Intermediate Guide to Data Analytics we look to cover some slightly more advanced Google Analytics set up items, along with some reporting and analysis techniques to move your GA knowledge on from more than just a basic understanding.

It is this insight into the data that will ensure you know where the gaps are in your marketing strategy, being able to identify problems and most importantly, how to solve them.

DIGITALBOOST

power up your business

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL BUSINESS GATEWAY OFFICE

Get expert advice on this and a wide range of topics for free at your local Business Gateway office.

bgateway.com/local-offices

DIGITALBOOST
power up your business

GLOSSARY

A/B testing
The process of comparing two variations of a single variable to determine which performs higher. The results will help inform and improve marketing efforts.

Audience personas
Representations of your actual / ideal customers.

Content strategy
The marketing and business process for creating and distributing relevant and valuable content for the target audience with the objective of driving actions.

Conversion rate optimisation (CRO)
CRO is the optimising activity in order to increase your conversion rate.

Customer segmentation
The practice of dividing a customer base into groups of individuals that are similar in terms of marketing aspects, such as age, gender, interests, location and buying habits.

Digital assets
Classified as images, multimedia and textual content files that can be used in your marketing activity.

Earned media
Media generated for your brand. This is unpaid media and can include Twitter retweets, Facebook likes, online reviews and word of mouth.

Engagement rate
A metric that measures the level of interaction from a piece of content receives from an audience.

Landing page optimisation
 The activity of optimising your site's pages to increase conversions.

Lead generation
The process of collecting names and contact information about qualified prospects to be contacted by sales teams.

Loyalty programme
An incentive plan to gather customers data. This may give a customer free merchandise, advanced access to new products or discounts.

Macro conversions
Those conversions that deliver on the business's main objectives and are the primary desired actions you should be looking for a user to take.

Marketing KPIs
The metrics that are tracked in order to ensure a more successful marketing campaign and attain the highest ROI possible.

Micro conversions
Micro conversions provide a part of the overall conversion journey, but taken in isolation to the overall journey they generally do not drive revenue at their own point of conversion.

Mobile strategy
Relates business goals with how mobile devices, products and services engage with users.

Owned media
Media which belongs to your brand which you control, such as: your website, blogs, social media channels and brochures.

Paid media
Any paid for advertising. This can include print ads, TV ads, display ads, paid search, promoted posts on Facebook and sponsored tweets, among others.

PESTEL
A framework used to scan an organisations external macro environment. The letters stand for Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environment.

SWOT
A structured planning method that evaluates the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats for a company, product, place or industry.

DIGITALBOOST
power up your business