

eBook

How to develop a digital marketing strategy

Expert guidance from the team at Hallam



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1. Introduction

Did you know that 50% of brands do not have a defined digital marketing strategy and that only 34% have integrated it with their wider marketing plan⁽¹⁾?



Susan Hallam
Founder and CEO, Hallam

That means that half of businesses are choosing to operate their digital marketing activities without having aligned them with their business goals or ensured that their marketing appeals to the right audience, in the right place and at the right time.

A digital marketing strategy is an essential document in your toolkit. It will help you focus your tactics on what's important so that you can maximise the return on the investment and effort you put into your online operations.

In this guide, I've pooled together our experts' knowledge to show you how you can develop your business' digital marketing strategy, including tactics on how to define your target customers and make the most from the ever-growing number of digital channels.

With it, you will take away some practical tips that you can apply to your marketing operation right now. I hope that you find it useful.

(1) Smart Insights - <https://www.smartinsights.com/digital-marketing-strategy/digital-strategy-development/10-reasons-for-digital-marketing-strategy>



2.

5 easy steps to create a digital strategy

For any business to grow and succeed online, there has to be a healthy balance between knowing your customer, knowing your own business and your actual capabilities.

To really act on this, you should be throwing all of this information into a digital strategy.

And no, I'm not talking about the type of strategy where you replace 2017 with 2018, and hope for the best. The digital landscape is evolving at a fast rate, and this will change the behaviours and expectations of your customers. This requires you to revisit it each year, and not simply go for a copy and paste job.

What Is a digital strategy?

A digital strategy can be defined as: “a form of strategic management and a business answer or response to a digital question, often best addressed as part of an overall business strategy.”

That section about being part of the overall business strategy is key: a lot of digital strategies fall short when they wander into being too creative and not aligned with what the company can actually achieve, or missing the mark on what the customer actually wants. Failing to deliver a good digital strategy not only impacts your online brand reputation, but it could cost you your business. The first real casualty of this was boo.com, who became victim to their own bad digital strategy in 2000. This example is used as “what not to do” for many ecommerce digital strategies, even today.

Here, I look at how you can structure a digital strategy in five steps, to tick all the boxes, and satisfy customer and business needs.



1. Create a SWOT analysis

Conducting a SWOT analysis might feel like you've gone back to school, but it's still a really handy way to get a high-level view of the internal and external business factors, and identify any key issues early on.

To be able to start developing a digital strategy, we want to walk away from the initial meeting with a top line SWOT analysis for the following:

- Acquisition
- Conversion
- Retention
- Growth



2. What do your customers want?

There is no point in driving masses of traffic to your website, if all you're going to get is a pile of spammy forms filled in, asking if you had a trip or fall last month.

Gathering data on customers is no new thing, but knowing where to start with pulling that data from your CRM system, or knowing what to capture in the first place is usually quite a daunting task, and one put off more than starting a diet in January...

Here are my top targeting options to use for a strategy:

Customer attributes: age, geography, sex, technology preferences, shoe size... Lucky for most, this data is pretty easy to grab from Google Analytics (maybe not the shoe size bit).

Customer value: you'll no doubt want to know what each of your different customers' lifetime value is. This allows you to segment into things like returning buyers, one time buyers etc, and target these with different methods.

Customer behaviour: find out their habits the non-creepy way: what is their preferred purchasing method? Even looking at this in terms of lead generation, there are many tools out there which allow you access to this information, such as heat mapping, Google Tag Manager and call tracking.

Customer channels: find out what parts of the funnel you are touching your customer. Don't just look at the last click attribution model, look at every step to assess which channels to concentrate on for each segment.

Now it's time for the fun stuff, as this all forms part of the customer personas. This is where you gather all of the above into your main 4-5 (or maybe more) customers and their habits and values. You can usually have a play around with some images at this step as well, but you basically form a pretty accurate profile for each of your different types of customer, and from here, are able to choose the methods which are going to be the most effective, and draw the most amount of sales/leads.

- Acquisition
- Conversion
- Retention
- Growth



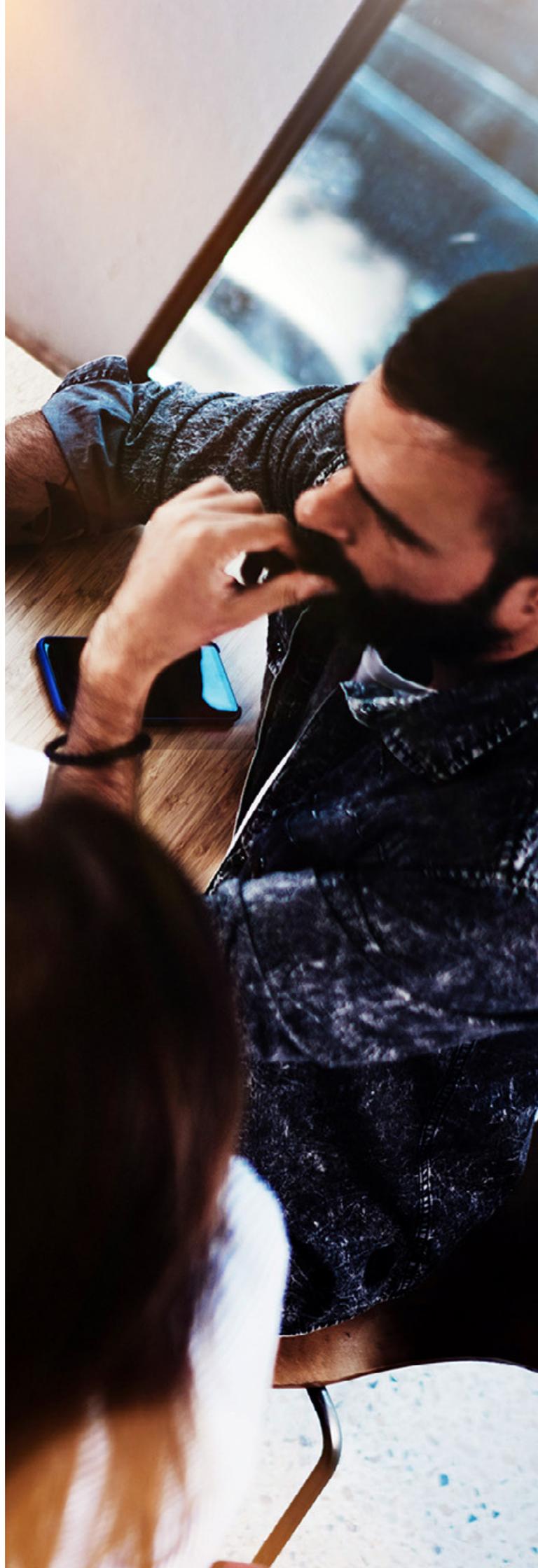
3. Define your value proposition

We know who the customer is, and we know what he has for breakfast, but now we need to know what the value of our own product is.

An online value proposition answers questions like who we are, what we offer, which markets we serve, and what makes us different?

But it's more than just a selling proposition, since it shows what you can offer in way of content, products, services and experiences to engage online customers. The value proposition extends this difference in that it identifies the reasons why customers will click on, return, register or buy from your site and ideally feel motivated enough to share their experience – the last point being key in an age where the customer increasingly defines the brand.

The customer value proposition should state the intrinsic benefits a visitor will get from the site, content, web service or functionality – and how that ties to your overall product or service. It cannot simply be your brand promise or a more general customer value proposition stuck online, since that misses the point that someone is on your site now and asking themselves questions such as “what's in this for me?”



4. Set goals and KPIs

In order to ensure that your digital strategy turns into a success, a big part of that is being able to set realistic targets to grow the business. What are you growing?

Start by looking at the basics, and work them out from there:

1. **Size of your audience:** this is how customers will reach your site, primarily measured through sessions in Google Analytics.
2. **Quality:** these are objectives for achieving interaction and conversion with site visitors. Conversion rates to your ecommerce elements or enquiry pages are going to be most important here.
3. **Value:** this is the profit and actual value of your products and services. You should set objectives for what you see as the one-off and lifetime value of a customer, so that you can assess how much to invest in digital marketing.



5. Outline a plan

Next up, you need to define how you're going to deliver everything, and ensure that you are targeting customers at various stages of the purchasing/sales funnel.

These four steps of online marketing activities are designed to help brands engage their customers.

1. Build awareness of your brand: talk about its products and services, maximising reach over time to create multiple interactions using different [paid](#), [SEO](#), [CRO](#), social and [digital PR](#) touch points.
2. Interact with your audience: how are you going to persuade site visitors or prospects to take the next step, like "View product", "Add to Basket", "Register" or "Sign up"?
3. Conversion to sale: this involves getting your audience to take that vital next step which turns them into paying customers, whether the payment is taken through online ecommerce transactions or offline channels.
4. Long-term engagement plan: developing a long-term relationship to build customer loyalty as repeat purchases using communications on your site, social presence, email and direct interactions.

For companies committed to growing and transforming, the key is to make sure that their digital strategy is customer and value-oriented and not just a list of measures to cut costs.



3.

How to use personas and buyers' journeys to create effective content

Many businesses fall into the trap of producing content without ever taking the time to create personas or map out their buyers' journeys.

They may only have a vague notion of who their customers are, based on generalities like demographic information, rather than their precise needs. If you really want to create content that will help you meet your business goals, then you need to start by identifying your key buyer personas. This means going beyond generic information and drilling down to specifics about your buyers, so you can create content that targets them precisely.

For example, if you sell cars it is no good simply knowing whether you are likely to be selling to men or women. You also need to know details like whether your target customer is a car enthusiast, or if they are simply after a reliable vehicle. If your typical customer simply wants a car they can depend on, but you are creating content for car aficionados, then you are wasting your time.

Here, I look at how you can structure a digital strategy in five steps, to tick all the boxes, and satisfy customer and business needs.



What is a buyer persona?

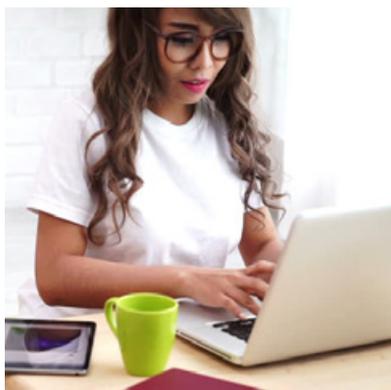
A buyer persona outlines the main traits held by a group of your customers. These traits need to apply to a sufficiently large group of potential buyers and shouldn't focus on details that are only true for a handful of people.

A persona may include the following details about a buyer:

- Job title
- Industry they work in
- Work responsibilities
- Motivation
- Challenges
- Ambitions
- Worries
- Interests
- Income
- Spending habits
- Personality traits
- Favourite brands
- How tech savvy they are
- Social media sites they use
- How much free time they have
- What their typical day looks like
- Where they get their information from

The details you include are likely to depend on your particular business. For example, someone's work life may be more relevant to a B2B persona, while a B2C persona may focus more on their home life.

Either way, the aim is to know them on a personal level and not just in relation to your products. Knowing your customers well will help you empathise with their needs, so you'll be more likely to create content that resonates with them. It's also a good idea to give each persona a name and find a picture to represent them, so you'll always have in mind that you are writing for a real person.



Job title: Marketing assistant, **Industry:** IT, **Age:** 21-26

Responsibilities: General digital marketing activities including SEO, paid search and social media.

Challenges: Finding the time to learn new skills and keep up with the latest trends.

Ambition: Become a recognised expert in their field and be promoted to a more senior marketing role.

Social media: LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter

Technology use: Very tech savvy. Always wants to try the latest technology. Uses laptop for work but mobile for personal use.

Sources of information: Marketing websites such as Search Engine Journal and Distilled.



Gathering information on your personas

There are several ways you can gather information on personas.

A good place to start is by speaking to employees who interact with your customers regularly and therefore know them well, like your sales or customer services team members. You could hold a workshop where everyone contributes their ideas with the aim of reaching a consensus on who your key personas are.

You can also use information from your customer relationship management database to validate your ideas. Even better, interview your real customers.

Mapping your buyer's journey

Once you have identified your key personas, it is a good idea to go through the key buyers' journeys they are each likely to go through when buying from you.

A typical buyer's journey has the following phases:

1. **Awareness** – when they first become aware they have a problem which needs solving
2. **Consideration** – when they start looking at their options to solve the problem
3. **Decision** – when they choose their solution
4. **Loyalty** – when they become a repeat customer

Awareness → Consideration → Decision → Loyalty

As you go through each phase of the buyer's journey, ask questions such as:

- What triggers them to enter and leave each phase?
- What are the main obstacles they come across at each phase?
- What questions do they ask?
- What doubts or concerns do they have?



Prioritising your personas

Once you've created your key personas it's tempting to try and create content for all of them but this isn't the best approach.

It will make it hard to cater effectively for any single persona because you'll simply dilute your efforts.

Creating content for several different personas also makes it harder for the people you are targeting to realise you are catering for them. You want people to know what type of content to expect when they land on your site, and more importantly that they will find something relevant to them. This will make them more likely to come back for more.

How many personas you cater for depends on the size and scope of your business. Bigger businesses may be more capable of catering for more than one persona but even they have to prioritise their personas.

To help you decide which persona to cater for, ask yourself questions such as:

- Which of your personas can you best provide for?
- Which one can best help you achieve your goals?
- Which of your personas will have the time to read your content?

You can then come up with a list of content ideas that takes into consideration information such as:

- What topics interest your personas
- What questions they tend to ask
- The level of knowledge they already have
- What they'd find helpful
- Your business goals



Catering content to your buyer's journey

Once you've chosen which persona to focus on, you can then create content that helps drive them through the buyer's journey by addressing their concerns.

You may find you are struggling at one phase in particular, so you could choose to concentrate most of your efforts on that stage. For example, B2B buyers or those making more expensive purchases, tend to spend longer in the consideration phase so you are likely to need more content for this phase.

Here are some examples of the types of content you could create for each phase:

Awareness

At this stage, it is not yet time to talk about your products because buyers are not ready to commit to a purchase. They are still gathering information. Aim to answer their questions in a simple but engaging way. You could create content like [infographics](#), [blog posts](#) or research-based reports.

Consideration

Now the buyer has fully understood the problem they'll be ready to start comparing various solutions. Checklists and buyers guides are useful at this stage. For more complex or expensive products or services, you could even invest in creating ebooks.

Decision

Once the buyer is ready to commit to a purchase, you need convince them that your brand is the best choice for them. [Case studies](#), testimonials and [reviews](#) can all help persuade buyers to choose your brand. Your content for this stage needs to clearly spell out the benefits of your products.

Loyalty

Now you've convinced them to buy from you, you can work on getting repeat sales and gaining their long term loyalty. The best way to do this is to continually offer them valuable content. For example, you could create how-to guides to help them get the most from your products. You could ask them to sign up to your newsletter, where you can then send them promotions.



4.

How to create a content grid

Creating high quality content is the cornerstone of your digital success.

We're sharing our free content grid for you to download, and give you suggestions for creating a powerful content grid to drive your digital strategy forward.



Creating a content grid

A content grid is a tool we like to use to help our clients to plan the content they will produce based on the audiences they want to reach.

We have made available a free template for you to use, and you can [download a copy of our content grid here](#).

As Google's algorithms continue to evolve, a common theme remains high quality content.

This means that Google expects you to have great content on your site in the form of written copy, imagery, photography, graphics and videos. It means that websites with poor quality copy will really struggle to rank highly, or even at all, in the Google search results.

But creating high quality content on a regular basis – as is Google's preference for fresh content – can be a daunting task. For many of my clients, knowing where to start or what to write about can be a real stumbling block.

“

Content is so important.

Websites with poor quality content will really struggle to rank highly, or even at all, in the Google search results.

hollam



The first step in your content grid: who's the audience?

Understanding your audience is the first step to creating a useful content grid.

This understanding needs to go beyond broad sweeping strokes like 'we're targeting small businesses' or 'we'd like to work with manufacturers'. Rather, it should be a specific set of audience members, to whom your content should speak.

Think about who you tend to speak to in your sales meetings. Rather than 'small businesses', which is far too broad, think about the people within those businesses. Were you selling in to the marketing manager perhaps? To the CEO? To the procurement manager?

Once you've considered that, go into more detail. What was the procurement manager like? What questions did he/she ask? How did they behave during your meeting? How did they find out about you in the first place? You could even go into demographics – what age range did the person fall into? Were they based here in the UK, operating locally or abroad? What can you tell about their online behaviour – tech savvy? Using a mobile more than desktop? How much time do you consider them to have – time rich? Time poor?

There's so much you could consider about your audience, and each audience member should be thought about in this way in order to create a useful image of that person.

The best way to approach this exercise is to involve your wider team – particularly the sales team if possible. Get everyone together in a room for a couple of hours, pull out the big paper and pen and start mind-mapping ideas about your potential audience members, fleshing out each one in detail.



Creating audience personas

The exercise above may well lead you to create audience personas.

This is a technique often used by web developers when crafting a great online experience, and more and more they are being used by savvy marketers and businesses to represent their audiences in a very real way.

A persona is basically an individual person who you create to represent a segment of your target audience. You might, for example, take the procurement manager position as suggested above; hone down your audience from 'we want to work with manufacturers' to 'we need to speak to the procurement managers of manufacturing businesses'. Create a persona to represent that audience; give them a name, a job title, an age, a photo. Add information based on your mind mapping session to flesh out how time rich or time poor they are, how they interact online, what their needs and motivations are.

You can then use this persona to give a real face to the audience segment you want to speak to. You can craft content specific to them, and by naming them you give yourself the ability to discuss the content with colleagues in line with your audience's needs – you'll find yourself asking questions like 'Would Joanne read this?'. It's a great way of giving your very specific, complex audience segments a quick reference that everyone can understand. Here's an example of how that might look:

Persona 3: Procurement



Name: Joanne Edge
Age: 48
Position: Buyer
Company: Manufacturing Company

She says: "I'm under pressure to find the best price but I also need the highest quality of product. I'm keen to understand what I'm getting and what value it provides."

Procurement Managers

Key Attributes	About this persona	Online Behaviour
<p>Time Poor ————— Time Rich ▲</p> <p>Technologically Challenged ————— Technologically Savvy ▲</p> <p>Answering to Others ————— Sole Decision Maker ▲</p> <p>Low Propensity to Buy ————— High Propensity to Buy ▲</p>	<p>Joanne has been working as a buyer for many years now and knows her job well. She is a proficient negotiator and has a keen eye for detail. She knows no one is perfect though and is continually meeting new sales people with whom she needs to interact successfully in order to achieve his targets as a buyer.</p> <p>She likes to stay up to date on best practice within her specialism and when he has time, will browse the web for anything that can help her day to day.</p> <p>She values the opportunity to add value to her own business and would not be against sharing anything she found that was useful. She may also approach his managers with training suggestions.</p>	<p>Joanne isn't time poor but equally she can't spend her days browsing the web either. She looks for answers to her questions and likes to follow discussions and updates from other procurement professionals in places such as LinkedIn. She seeks advice from reputable sources.</p> <h4>Keywords</h4> <div style="border: 1px solid gray; height: 40px; width: 100%;"></div>



Your business 'brand stories': what messages do you want to share?

Of course, understanding your audience isn't the only component to the exercise of planning new content for your website. You'll also need to consider what the messages are that you want to communicate.

You might call these messages your brand stories. Consider what it is about your business that helps you to stand out from the rest. What do your clients like about you? What impresses your prospects? Ask your sales team to feed into this. You might even consider surveying your customers to get their input.

- We undertook this exercise with a client to help them decipher what they were going to share on social media. Here's what we came up with as their brand stories:
- Long standing reputation, having been established over 100 years ago
- Expertise of individuals within the business and experience within the sectors in which they work is a key benefit to working with them
- Single office makes cross-departmental working with the business easier
- They have clients overseas as well as in the UK and are equipped with the technology to keep in touch no matter where you are

They have a fantastic office space which reflects on their business' prosperity and standing within the community and can be easily accessed for client meetings

With all of these, we tested the story with the 'so what' factor. You've got a nice office, you say? So what? You must consider what the brand story actually means for your audience in order to make it useful.

Another example of this came up during a training session with a group of manufacturers. One of the delegates said a key brand story for him was that their business had a new machine. "So what?" We asked. Turns out that 'so what' was that customers would receive quicker delivery of parts, which can be crafted to a higher standard and far more specific specifications than any other machine could provide. So the benefit to the customer became the brand story, not the machine itself.



Creating your content grid

So you now know who you're trying to talk to, and what messages you want to communicate.

Now to create a content grid to plan out your content. If, like us, you're a fan of Powerpoint, open a new document. You could always do this in Word or Excel if you preferred. Here's how ours might look for Hallam:

	Persona 1: Pete the business manager	Persona 2: Joanne the procurement manager	Persona 3: Sophie the marketing executive	Persona 4: John the website developer
Brand story 1: reputation and long establishment				
Brand story 2: expertise of individuals within the business				
Brand story 3: quality of services provided				

As you can see, the personas run along the top of the grid and the brand stories down the side.



Next, fill in your grid by cross referencing the two brand stories with the personas to ideate what specific content would be relevant to both. Here's how ours might look:

	Persona 1: Pete the business manager	Persona 2: Joanne the procurement manager	Persona 3: Sophie the marketing executive	Persona 4: John the website developer
Brand story 1: reputation and long establishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Established 1999” logo • Clear about page • Founders story in the form of a blog about Susan hallam • Client case studies/logos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Established 1999” logo • Client case studies/logos • Reviews and testimonials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blog posts on a wide range of topics 	
Brand story 2: expertise of individuals within the business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bio articles for members of staff • Announcing new Google accreditations • Inclusion of certificates and logos on site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultant videos describing services offered • Downloadable whitepapers to explain services in full 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of clear, usable “how to” guides • Downloadable tools and whitepapers 	
Brand story 3: quality of services provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client case studies • Google Partner status announcement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infographic showing delivery process • Examples of previous work • Blog posts to showcase expertise 		

You can build your own grid and continually update and refine it to underpin your content strategy. Great if you're struggling for new content ideas, or simply want to be able to easily collaborate on content creation within your business.



5.

Top tips for carrying out an effective content audit

When was the last time you carried out a content audit of your website?

If you've never done one, or it's been a long time since your last audit, you may be at risk of losing control of your content.

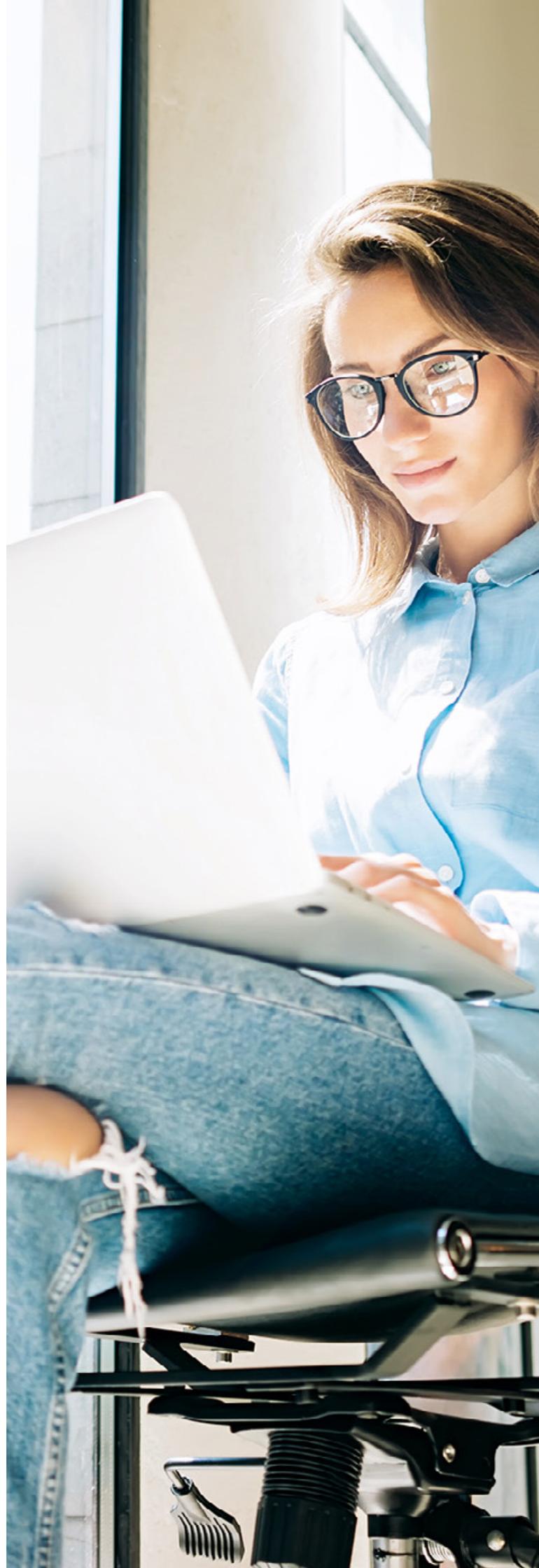


Take a moment to think about how you feel about your website. Are you confident your customers find it easy to use and is it giving you the results you want? Are you proud of how it looks? Unless you have great content, it's hard to answer yes to these questions.

Content is the backbone of an effective website and yet it rarely gets the attention it deserves. In order to keep in control of your content, it's important to occasionally step back and carry out an audit.

A content audit will help you figure out what's working and what's not working. It can also help you streamline your content creation and set your priorities based on evidence.

Unfortunately, content audits often get deprioritised because they can be daunting and time consuming. The following tips will help you carry out a content audit to improve your website and make you proud of it.



How often should you carry out a content audit?

Carrying out a content audit shouldn't be a one-off task.

It's a good idea to schedule a regular audit every year or so, but exactly how often you do one depends on how big your website is. You certainly shouldn't wait until your site has become unwieldy before you think about an audit.

One of the most common triggers for carrying out a content audit is creating a new website, but even then it is sometimes treated as an afterthought. This can result in content simply being lifted and shifted from the old site to the new one. Creating a new website is the perfect opportunity to revamp your content, so don't let it pass you by!

It is also worth carrying out an audit when you develop a new content strategy. If your old content is not aligned with your new strategy, it could dilute any effort you make to improve it.

Signs your website needs a content audit

There are a several signs which often indicate it's time to carry out a content audit including:

- Haphazard content. This often happens if you started creating content without a strategy, or someone to oversee the process. You may have had different people adding to your website over time, which can result in your content becoming inconsistent.
- Visitors to your website struggling to find your content. This could be caused by having too much content, or not considering the customer journey when you add new content to your site.
- A website that looks dated. Web design moves on pretty quickly. Even if you revamped your website a few years ago it may already be looking tired.
- Out of date information on your website. You may have information that is no longer relevant, or product lines you no longer stock.



What to analyse

When you carry out a content audit, there are all manner of things you can analyse which makes it is easy to get lost in the details. So, it's best to prioritise what's most important to improving your website.

A few of the fundamental metrics you may want to analyse include:

- Traffic and rankings to help you assess which of your content has the most SEO value.
- Engagement metrics, such as time spent on page.
- Bounce rate to give you an idea of how useful people are finding a particular page.
- New vs returning visitors to work out if your content is good enough to make people come back.

As you go through each page, ask yourself questions such as:

- Does it cater for a particular persona?
- Does it support your business goals?
- Does it fit in with your content marketing strategy?
- Does it reflect your branding and tone of voice?
- Is the URL SEO-friendly? Your URLs should include keywords and help people understand where they are on your site. Avoid random meaningless characters.

Good URL: <https://www.example.com/case-studies/DIYcompany/>

Bad URL: <https://www.example.com/67788/DIY/show4.html>

- Is the meta data SEO-optimised?
- Does the heading make sense to your customers and is it SEO friendly?
- Is the copy well written? Your copy shouldn't just be grammatically correct, it should also be written specifically for an online audience.
- Is the copy either too long, or too short?
- Have you included internal links to other relevant pages on your site?
- Are your external links up to date?
- Are there any broken links?
- Is your content **mobile friendly**? Mobiles and tablets are now used more than desktops to **access the internet**.
- Is the content duplicated elsewhere on your site? Duplicate pages dilute your SEO efforts, so you could **redirect** additional pages to the one getting the most traffic.
- Where should the page sit in your website's taxonomy?
- Are the images of a good quality? Your images should look professional and reflect your brand.



How to audit your content

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	Page title	URL	Date last updated	Owner	Quality	Notes
2	Home	cheesedream.com	07/10/16	Harry	Green	Content is mostly good but positioning statements need work
3	Products	cheesedream.com/products	06/04/15	Alexander	Red	Information is sparse and outdated
4	Brie	cheesedream.com/products/brie	05/08/15	Alexander	Red	Needs a full rewrite with improved tone of voice
5	Stilton	cheesedream.com/products/stilton	05/08/15	Alexander	Red	Needs a full rewrite with improved tone of voice
6	Feta	cheesedream.com/products/feta	05/08/15	Alexander	Red	Needs a full rewrite with improved tone of voice
7	Gouda	cheesedream.com/products/gouda	07/10/16	Alexander	Green	Updated recently, needs no work
8	Red Leicester	cheesedream.com/products/red_leicester	05/08/15	Alexander	Red	Needs a full rewrite with improved tone of voice
9	Goats Cheese	cheesedream.com/products/goats_cheese	04/03/17	Alexander	Green	Updated recently, needs no work
10	Mature Cheddar	cheesedream.com/products/mature_cheddar	04/03/17	Alexander	Green	Updated recently, needs no work
11	Wensleydale	cheesedream.com/products/wensleydale	05/08/15	Alexander	Red	Needs a full rewrite
12	About	cheesedream.com/about	02/06/14	Harry	Orange	Content is mostly good but needs tweaking with improved tone of voice
13	History	cheesedream.com/about/history	02/06/14	Harry	Orange	Content is mostly good but needs tweaking with improved tone of voice
14	Meet The Team	cheesedream.com/about/team	02/06/17	Harry	Green	Updated recently, needs no work

There is no single correct way to carry out a content audit but if you've never done one before the following steps can help guide you:

- Start by setting your standards, so you know what your vision for your content is. This can come from your content strategy. It is a good idea to carry out a competitor analysis to help benchmark your content.
- Get a list of all your pages including any orphaned pages, which aren't in your site structure, or those on any microsites. If you can't easily get this from your CMS, find someone with the technical know-how to help you, like an SEO expert or a web developer.
- Put all your page URLs into a spreadsheet with columns for the metrics you want to analyse.
- Include columns for actions such as keep as is, archive, redirect, or repurpose next to each page. Archive pages which are out of date but may still contain information people will find useful. [Repurpose content](#) which you still need but could be improved. [Redirect](#) duplicate pages, or those with negligible traffic, to a single destination that is relevant to the topic being covered. It is best to ask an SEO expert for advice on the best approach to take.
- Include a column for notes you can refer to later. You can note down details that explain the action you've chosen, if it's not obvious. You could also write brief notes to remind you what needs addressing when the page is repurposed.
- Assign a high, low or medium priority to each page, so you can work on the ones which need the most attention first. Or, you could go for a colour coding system like shown in the example above.

Once you've completed your audit, you should be left with a list of pages which support your content marketing strategy and each have a clear goal. Your key pages should also have a home in your site's structure and support your customer journey.

You can then focus on the actions you assigned to each page and work out if you have any [content gaps](#) that need filling.



Who should work on your content audit

The actual content audit is best carried out by a writer because they have the knowledge to assess the quality of copy on each page and make sure it fits in with your editorial standards.

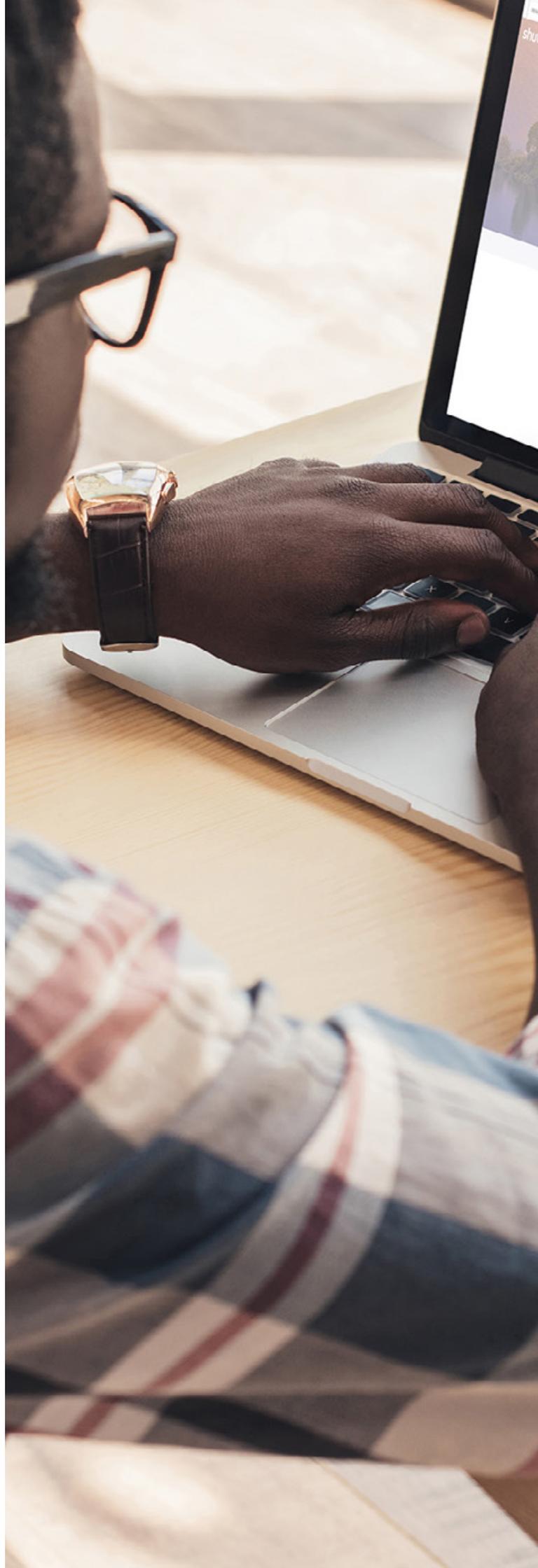
You'll also need your writers to help repurpose any pages, or create new ones if you've identified content gaps. If you are carrying out a large content audit, you'll probably need a team of several writers. Everyone involved in analysing the content should understand your editorial standards and what to look for when they are assessing each page. This is especially important if you are using a temp or intern to help lessen the workload.

The writers will also need the support of subject matter experts like SEOs or web developers. It is a good idea to consult an expert before carrying out actions which could impact your SEO, such as deleting pages. Writers may also need help understanding your content management system and all its capabilities. You may also need to consult stakeholders in your business before deciding whether you need certain pages or not.

Make sure everyone involved in creating your content and uploading it to your site will have the time to carry out the actions. This may include web developers, designers and SEO experts to help with tasks like building new pages, sourcing new images and redirecting pages.

Conclusion

Content audits are very much like that chore you keep putting off but once it's done it makes your life easier and you wish you'd done it earlier. So, if you've been continually relegating your content audit to the bottom of your to-do list, now's the time to tackle it.



6.

The mobile digital strategy checklist

Mobile searching now outnumbers desktop searching. In fact, there is a good chance you are reading this on a mobile device. Review this checklist for developing your business' mobile digital strategy.

Whether you are a B2B or B2C business, your mobile presence is key to your digital success.

The ubiquitous smartphone is leading the way when we are searching, when we are consuming content, when we are reaching out to communicate.

Not that many marketers have any doubt about the importance of having a mobile digital strategy, but if you still need convincing then be sure to take a read through Dave Chaffey at SmartInsights' compilation of [useful set of mobile marketing statistics](#) that you can use to set priorities.



Your mobile digital strategy checklist: the first 8 questions

Of course, mobile marketing is a massive area but what this chapter will provide is a framework for you to review your mobile performance, and start to plan your way forward in the mobile world.

Here are the areas we have chosen to cover:

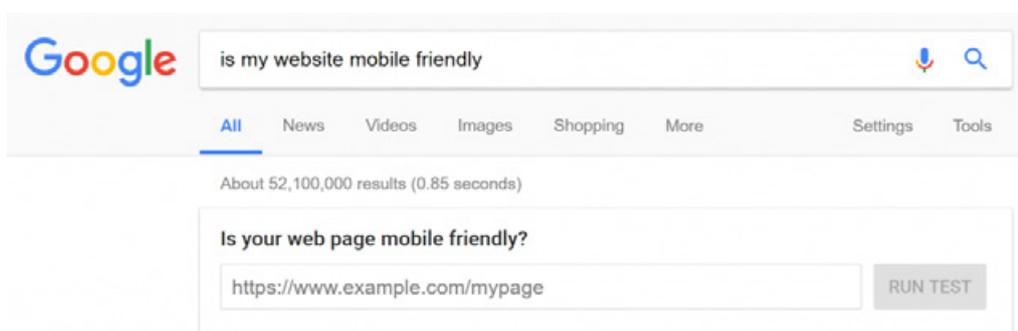
1. Is your website mobile friendly?
2. Are you creating content specifically designed for mobile users?
3. Do your email marketing messages delight mobile recipients?
4. How can you harness “near me” searches for customers local to your business?
5. What is your strategy for your mobile advertising campaigns?
6. Is your social media messaging aligned with the needs of mobile users?
7. Have you refreshed your marketing strategy for your apps?
8. How much impact are accelerated mobile pages (AMP) having on your mobile strategy?



1. Make your website mobile-friendly in google's estimation

A key moment in the transition to the mobile world was [Mobile-geddon in April 2015](#), when Google announced that mobile friendly web pages would get priority in the mobile search results.

You need to plan for mobile first indexing, and Google has embedded its [mobile friendly testing tool](#) right in the search results if you have any doubts as to how well your mobile site performs:



Your mobile search checklist

- Use Google's mobile friendly test on all your pages (not just your homepage)
- Don't rely on these results slavishly
- If you have a responsive website that services identical content on both desktop and mobile devices then you have no worries
- But if you have created a mobile experience that minimises text content then you need to plan for mobile first indexing, and how you are going to incorporate that rich text into your design. We have written a guide to [planning for the mobile first world](#)

Mobile user experience

Google is also most interested in how your mobile website satisfies your users' needs. A great mobile design will lead to more satisfied user requirements. Google have previously published a mobile app user experience (UX) best practice guide. The four underlying principles are:

- Remove roadblocks to usage
- Make conversion decisions simple
- Provide the ultimate in convenience
- Self service engagement and delight



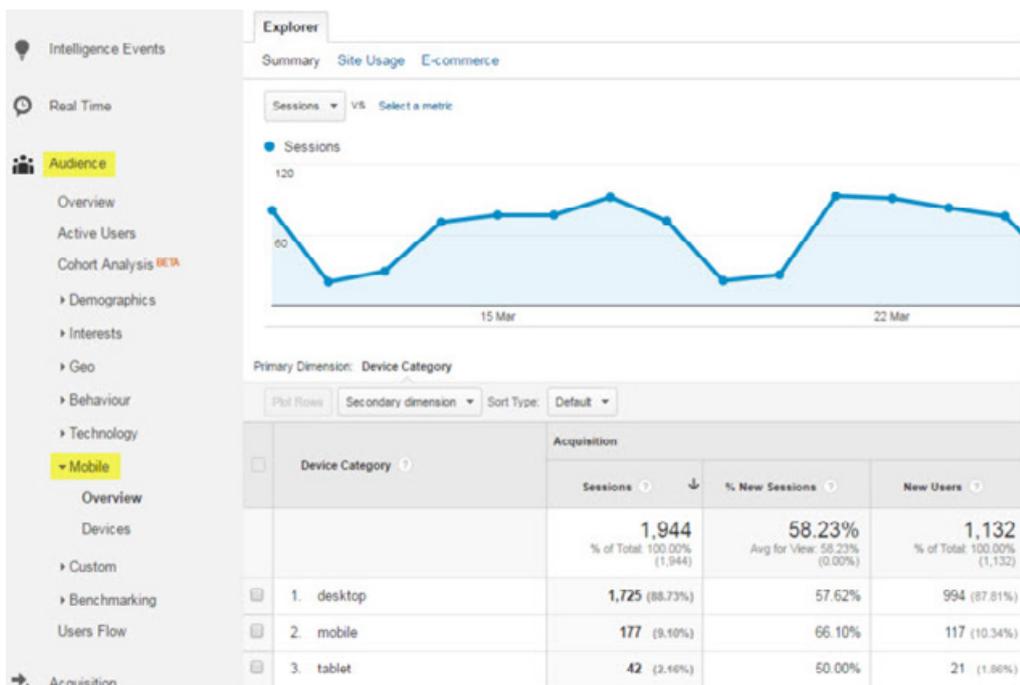
2. Content driven mobile seo

The rules for optimising content in a mobile world are different to the desktop world.

The intention of mobile users is usually significantly different, their position in the customer journey is different, their needs are different. And you need to be developing content that meets their needs at that specific moment.

Keyword research for mobile

First, it would be useful to go back to your keyword research and identify those mobile-centric keyword searches and themes for your brand or business. A good place to start? Google Analytics. Use the Audience -> Mobile report to find out how your site performs on mobile in comparison to desktop:

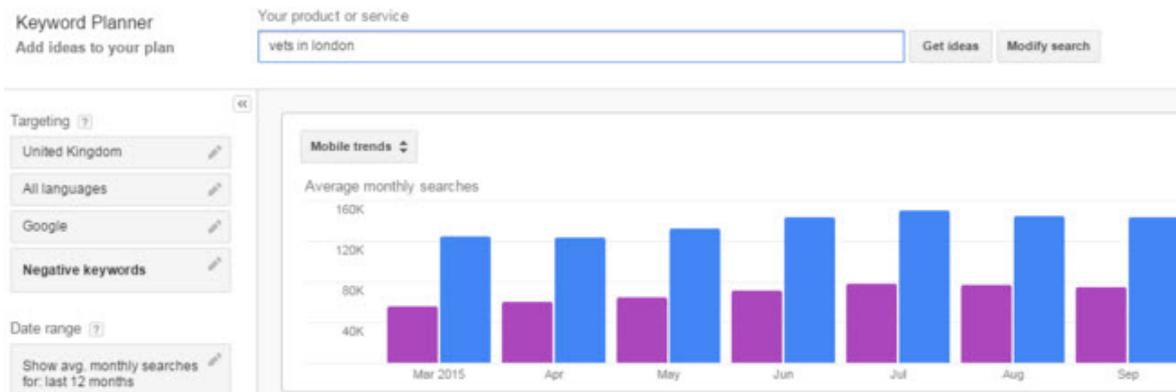


Audience Mobile Overview, Google Analytics

While for some businesses it would be normal for desktop traffic to still be higher than mobile, it is always worth bearing in mind that a low amount of mobile traffic in comparison to desktop could indicate that you have work to do on making your website mobile-friendly.



Google Search Console also has a useful report under Search Traffic > Search Analytics > Queries that shows you desktop vs mobile clicks, impressions, click-through rate and position, for specific queries used to find your website:



Search Analytics Queries, Mobile Vs Desktop, in Google Search Console

This is a good place to discover key terms or topics that have more mobile clicks in comparison to desktop, which you need to pay attention to for your mobile SEO strategy.

The Google Keyword Planner features a 'mobile trends' section, so you can see which of the keywords you are already targeting have the most search on mobile while searching for potential new queries that you want to build into your strategy:

Desktop Clicks ▼	Mobile Clicks	Desktop Impressions	Mobile Impressions	Desktop CTR	Mobile CTR
469	135	666	373	70.42%	36.19%
120	235	720	1,538	16.67%	15.28%
31	53	121	224	25.62%	23.66%
25	27	217	167	11.52%	16.17%
21	42	105	219	20%	19.18%

Mobile Trends – Google Keyword Planner



Mobile content hubs

We wrote an [insightful blog on content hubs](#). Once you have identified the keywords and themes that are mobile-centric for your business, assess whether you have been exhaustive in addressing those themes and identify gaps where you can create content hubs specifically for mobile traffic.

Google created an article on building a '[Mobile-Centric Search Strategy](#)' which shares some useful insights.

When you create content for mobile, think about how you can present it in the best possible way across devices. This is particularly important if you don't think you have quite hit the nail on the head yet with getting your website to be a mobile-friendly, seamless experience. If you know specific content performs well on mobile, can the layout of the page content be improved for mobile screens, the calls to action reviewed, are there any quick wins to optimise conversions?

Don't forget to monitor the performance of any content you create for mobile, and pay attention to how it performs across devices.

Reporting tools

A word of caution when it comes to keyword reporting tools and mobile rankings. Most tools currently have difficulty in successfully reporting on mobile search results to the same calibre we are used to with desktop reporting. Cindy Krum speaks about this in a [Moz article](#), stating that often, these tools can not report on things such as OS, app pack rankings, location and connection speed.

Particularly for ecommerce, it would be worth setting up [cross device reports in Google Analytics](#), to connect multiple sessions across devices.



3. Email marketing

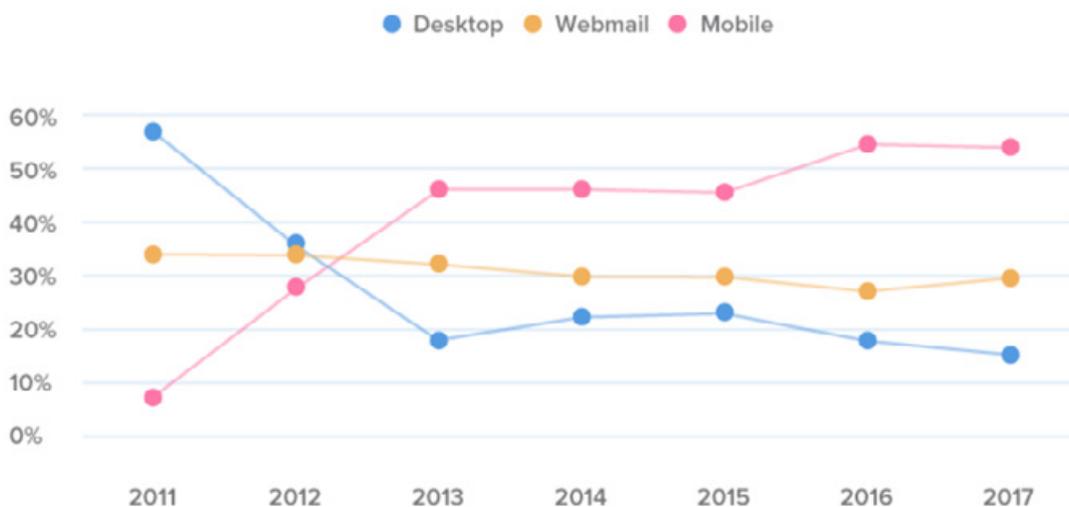
I'm sure you read your emails on your smartphone. We all do.

But have you focused specifically on improving your mobile email experience? It could well pay dividends.

Litmus analysed more than 17 billion emails, and well over half of emails are now opened on a mobile device.

OPENS BY ENVIRONMENT

While mobile remained dominant, this year did see some fluctuations for mobile, webmail, and desktop.



netingenuity.com

In fact, mobile email opens have grown exponentially since 2011, as reported by [Campaign Monitor](#). Not only that, they have found that mobile email readers who open an email again a second time from a different device are “65% more likely to click through.”

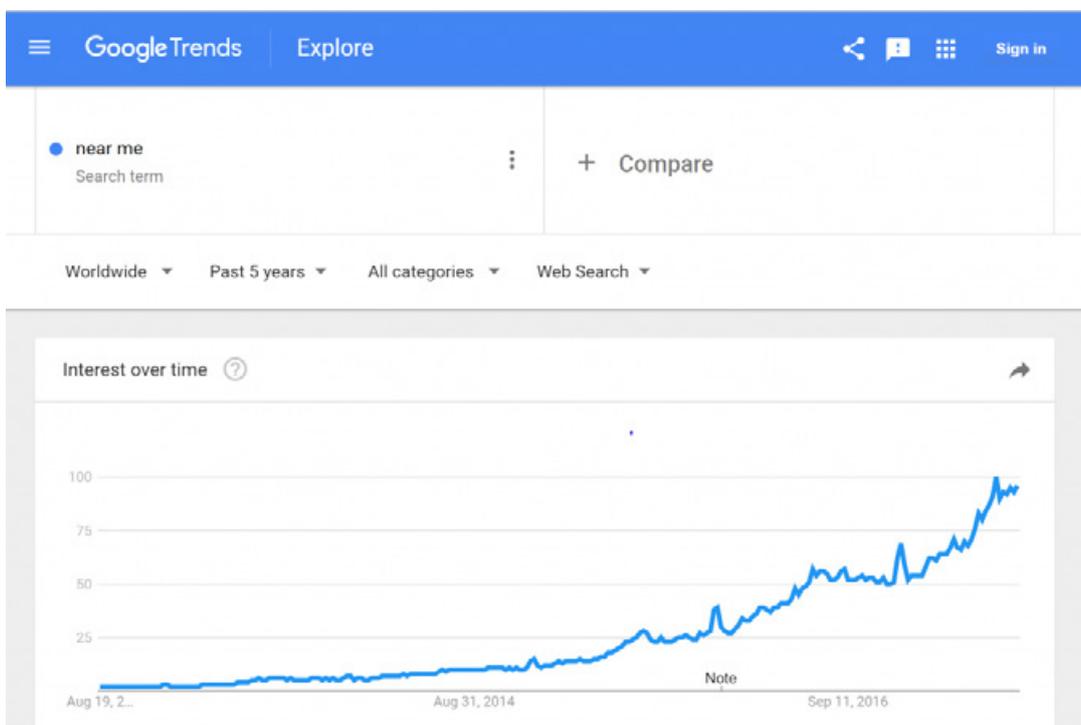
That being said, email marketing is an important part of your mobile strategy. You need to ensure your email campaigns are compelling, and focus on optimising thoroughly for both mobile and desktop viewing.



4. Local search optimisation

One of the most dramatic changes in search behaviour is the Near Me search, showing local intention for products and services.

See Google Trends data for search for behaviour over the last two year including the phrase “near me”, but keep in mind that Google may also assume implicitly that you are looking for local content.



The latest [search quality guidelines document](#) from Google states that “for many or most queries, the user location does not change our understanding of the query and user intent” (page 58-59).

However, for queries where the user defines an ‘explicit location’, which may or may not match their actual location, they are telling Google exactly what they want to see. For example, ‘hotels in London’ or ‘I need a hair salon in Leeds’. These are the search queries that you need to pay extra attention to and ensure you are targeting where relevant to your business.



5. Creating a mobile paid advertising campaign

If you are running any PPC campaigns, it is worth regularly reviewing how you can improve mobile targeting.

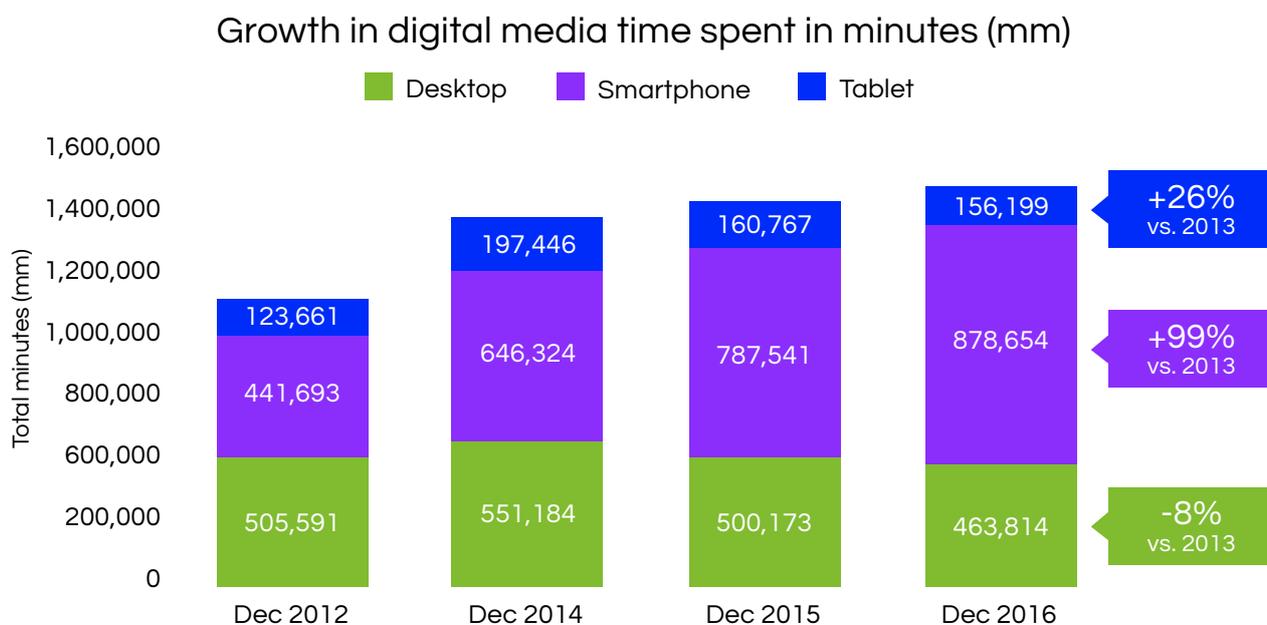
The options available to your business are expanding rapidly, and we have written a number of posts to help you refine your mobile advertising strategy:

- The ability to integrate mobile text messaging into your campaigns. Be sure to [read our analysis of our initial tests for integrating SMS into Ads here](#).
- Of course there are specific [advertising options for use with your mobile prospecting](#).
- And you can be [tailoring your spend and bidding strategy](#) to your most (or least) desirable targeted customers.

6. Mobile social media advertising

Recent research by ComScore demonstrates that 69% of all social media usage is on a mobile device.

And for many businesses, the social space is the perfect way to address the needs of your mobile customers and prospects. Social media is the opportunity to provide the right content at the right moment.



comScore media matrix multi-platform and mobile matrix, U.S Dec 2013 - Dec 2016



7. Apps and optimisation

If you have a mobile app here are two key considerations for your mobile strategy, both of which have a useful link for further reading:

- Advertise your app to reach more prospective customers. Here is a [guide on how to do it](#).
- Optimise your app in the app store (ASO, App Store Optimisation) — to find out how, [read more](#) on this Kissmetrics blog.
- Get your app indexed by supporting HTTP deep links, in order to get your app content ranking in mobile search — [read more](#) on Moz.

8. Accelerated mobile pages

Our colleague Ben Wood wrote [this very digestible article about AMP](#), covering the basics of Google's open source project to speed up the delivery of content on mobile devices.

Although only widely used by large websites such as news outlets, if you are regularly publishing content on your website it would be a good idea to prepare for this, as Ben's blog post highlights.

The relevance and importance of AMP remains open for debate, but our own website strategy includes AMP pages, and by checking our Google Analytics we can see that the AMP pages play an important part in our landing page strategy, meaning the first page that visitors visit on our site is not the HTML version, but the AMP version.

Here is a snippet from our Google Analytics showing AMP performance; are you running a similar report for your own business?

Landing Page ?		Acquisition
		Sessions ? ↓
		35,960 % of Total: 6.24% (576,570)
<input type="checkbox"/>	1. /competition-facebook-business-page/amp/	2,760 (7.68%)
<input type="checkbox"/>	2. /social-media-glossary/amp/	2,263 (6.29%)
<input type="checkbox"/>	3. /what-is-amp-and-who-actually-needs-it/amp/	2,254 (6.27%)
<input type="checkbox"/>	4. /visiting-website-a1-webstats/amp/	1,564 (4.35%)
<input type="checkbox"/>	5. /google-analytics-desktop-vs-mobile-vs-tablet-metrics/amp/	1,270 (3.53%)
<input type="checkbox"/>	6. /google-analytics-hour-of-day-day-of-week-reports/amp/	1,238 (3.44%)



Final thoughts for your mobile digital strategy

We've covered 8 topics in this post. Here's a quick summary of some of the main areas your business should be addressing:

1. Is your website mobile friendly?

2. Are you creating content specifically designed for mobile users?

3. Do your email marketing messages delight mobile recipients?

4. How can you harness "near me" searches for customers local to your business?

5. What is your strategy for your mobile advertising campaigns?

6. Is your social media messaging aligned with the needs of mobile users?

7. Have you refreshed your marketing strategy for your apps?

8. How much impact is accelerated mobile pages (AMP) having in your mobile strategy?



7.

How to create a killer Twitter strategy

Social media can provide you with a great opportunity to engage with your business's target market. However, it takes time, investment and a strong strategy to make sure it works as hard as possible for you.

Several people usually have access to a company's Twitter account, from the managing director to the marketing manager and even external agencies. It's therefore vital to have a strategy document to help ensure consistency is maintained by all parties involved.

In this chapter, we will run through the components of a successful Twitter strategy. There's no single correct strategy and a lot of the following can also be applied to other social platforms. It's also worth noting that the goals and objectives are likely to vary from one business to the next.

So, whether your Twitter account is new or not, your strategy should have the following components.



The foundations of your strategy

To begin with, you should outline how Twitter can play an essential role in your larger marketing strategy.

You can justify using social media in a number of ways. For example, because customers are on social media, engaging with them on it can help build familiarity and trust.

You should also start by setting a few parameters and ensure everyone knows success won't come overnight.

Determine goals and objectives

Setting goals is a fundamental component of long-term success. How can you realise your aims if you haven't defined what they are?

Goals allow you to track and measure success and provide you with insights that can guide your strategy as it evolves.

Some common objectives to aim for include:

- Increasing your number of followers
- Increasing traffic to your website
- Enhancing your customer service
- Promoting your brand
- Generating new business
- Becoming an information source

There are many aspects that can be tracked and analysed, but you need to decide which metrics will truly show the difference social media is making to your business.



Reporting

Once you've determined your metrics, it's important to produce a report, using the analytics section of Twitter.

We recommend reviewing this monthly but if quarterly works better for you, then you can do that instead.

This way you can track success over time and identify which tweets, or pieces of content, are having the greatest impact.

The report should detail the activity undertaken that month on your social media accounts, how many times your pieces of content were shared, liked and read, how many people were driven to your site as a result, and how many new likes and followers you received.

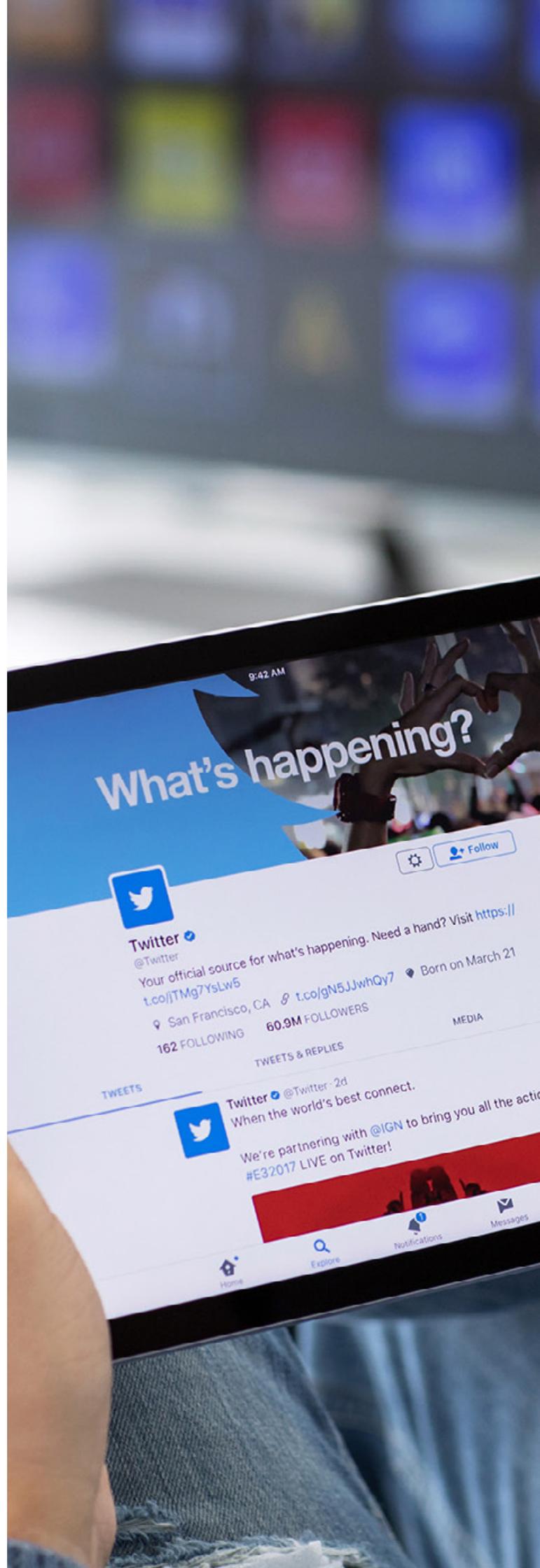
Without doing this, how else will you show a return on investment?

Define target audience

Defining your target audience is the foundation of any business' marketing plan and strategy.

It's also important to monitor how your audience changes over time, once you push more content through Twitter.

You should have an overview of the profiles of people who interact with you in your monthly report. You can access audience insights in Twitter analytics, which shows what your followers are interested in. You also need to ensure the accounts you're engaging with are aligned with your audience.



Tone of voice

Platforms like Twitter are hotbeds of industry chat and you need to be participating in the conversation in order to keep up online.

You should aim to be informative but not intrusive. Being overly promotional is never well-received either.

Usually, accounts remain anonymous (i.e. no named person runs it) so it's helpful to define a 'voice' so that tweets from multiple sources are presented in a consistent tone.

Your tone-of-voice should help reinforce your brand values and personality. Appearing human and approachable is vital to the success of a Twitter strategy because users can be hostile to the over-use of automation and the constant regurgitation of your blogs.

Decide how you will approach promoting products and using calls to action to ensure you gain trust from your followers.

Content principles

This section is arguably the most important.

A Twitter account can't survive or compete unless it is producing quality content. Make sure you stay relevant and current, and cover a broad base of content types and sources to retain interest levels.

Our top tips

- Keep it varied and retweetable
- Encourage engagement through questions
- Link to your company blog or news section
- Don't engage in politics
- Always keep in mind your audience
- Use hashtags



Managing risks

You should have a plan in place, and a designated person accountable for any negative tweets you receive.

Resources

Here you should outline who is responsible for sourcing and publishing tweets, coordinating replies to incoming messages and monitoring the account.

The resource impact of running a Twitter account is low relative to other channels.

There are a few different platforms that can monitor and schedule tweets for you, we would recommend [Hootsuite](#). It's easy to use, does the job, and it's free! You can create different streams to help monitor your account, such as:

- Home feed
- Any mentions
- All outgoing tweets
- All scheduled tweets in the pipeline

It's useful to have this all in one place. You can also post tweets directly from their dashboard.

[Followerwonk](#) is another social media tool which can help you find, compare and analyse relevant Twitter accounts. You can choose to search Twitter profiles or bios and identify relevant companies for you to connect with.

Once you identify some social media influencer accounts, it's not enough just to follow them and hope for the best. Engage with them and build a relationship.

Our top tips

You should try to:

- Interact with content they post – retweet, share, like, comment
- Address them directly – where appropriate
- If they have a blog, comment on their posts – show that you are actually reading their content
- Make sure your engagement is authentic – don't just retweet every single thing they post, make it meaningful
- Be realistic. Establishing relationships with social media influencers takes time and will not yield instant results, unfortunately



Scheduling

How will you draft and get approval for tweets?

Outline and advise on the process here. We would suggest drafting a month's worth of tweets and getting them approved the month before, then scheduling them via Hootsuite.

Time

Decide when to tweet and why.

I'd vary the times you tweet and determine what works best for you. In our experience, I've gained the most engagement at lunchtime in the UK, between 12pm and 2pm.

Visuals

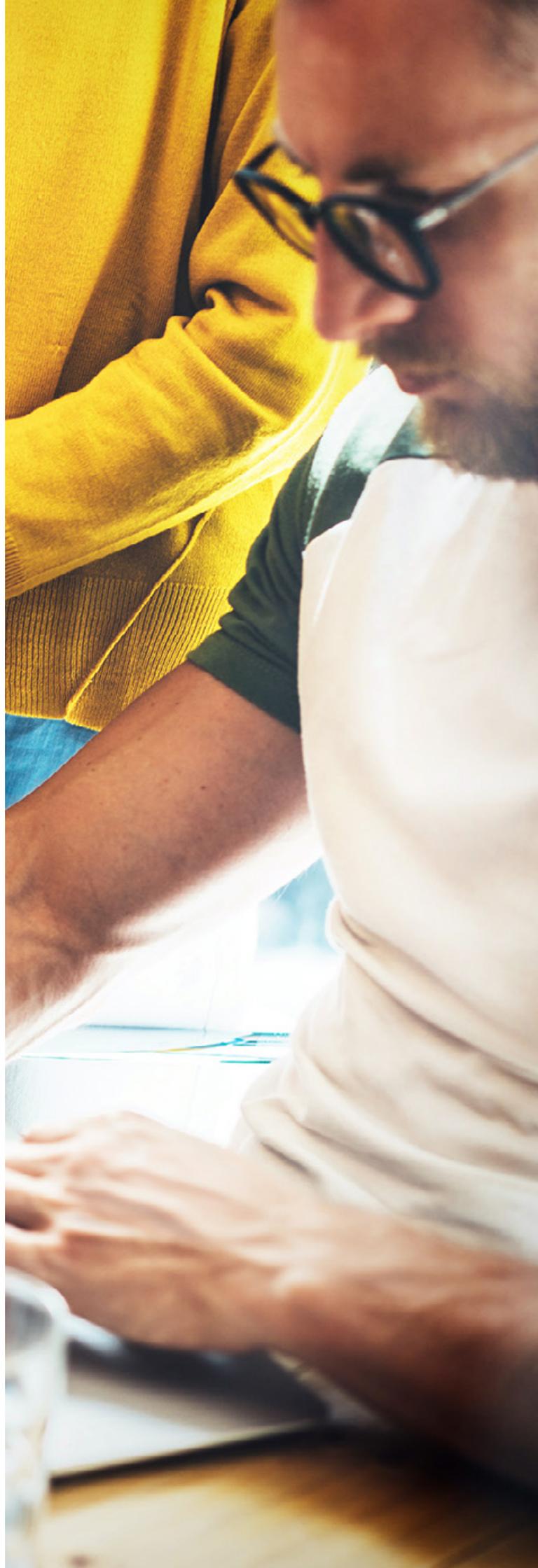
Images improve engagement, it's a fact.

Include images in as many tweets as possible. Do you have an image library you can dip into? Do you have the right permissions to use the images? We've done a blog post that outlines [The 14 Best Sites For Free Stock Photos](#).

Availability

How long will you spend managing the account? And when will you respond?

Usually, Twitter accounts are looked after during office hours, Monday to Friday.



Following and followers

You should have a follower strategy. Here you should outline all the key influencers and media contacts within the industry.

Also, decide what your following strategy will be. Will you follow back any relevant accounts that follow you? We would, it's good Twitter etiquette to follow people back when they follow you.

Also worth mentioning is that having an imbalance between 'following' and 'follower' figures can result in poor Twitter reputation. You should try your best to keep it as even as possible and if anything, have more followers than you follow.

Verified

Are you verified? Can you realistically get verified? Getting verified adds authenticity and trust.

There is no harm in requesting verification even if you're rejected at first, which is likely to happen unless your account is well established. You can always make another request once your account becomes more established and you have more followers.



8.

Online reviews: developing a strategy for your local business

Does your business have an ongoing plan for capturing customer feedback online?

Here we will be giving you an overview of how to develop a successful reviews strategy for your local business.



Why should you care about online reviews?

To begin with, it's worth stepping back and thinking about why online reviews are so important.

Testimonials and case studies on your site are great but ultimately they're biased because they're moderated by you. While customers may find them useful, what they really want to read are independent reviews from other customers. They want to know what your customers really think about you, to find out if you have any bad reviews and see how you respond to them. Bright Local's recent 2016 [survey](#) highlights some key points regarding the importance of online reviews:

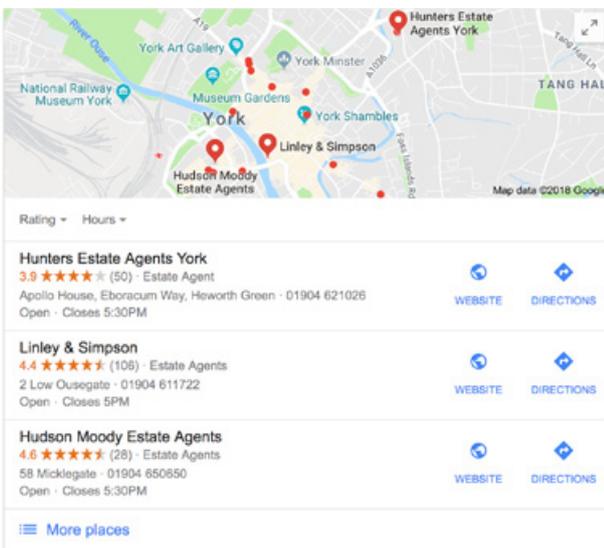
-  **84%**
of people trust online reviews as much as a personal recommendation
-  **7 out of 10**
consumers will leave a review for a business if they are asked to
-  **90%**
of consumers read less than 10 reviews before forming an opinion about a business
-  **54%**
of people will visit the website after reading positive reviews
-  **73%**
of consumers think that reviews older than 3 months are no longer relevant
-  **74%**
of consumers say that positive reviews make them trust a local business more
-  **58%**
of consumers say that the star rating of a business is important



As in previous years, Bright Local's survey highlights the growing importance of reviews for local businesses. In particular, they emphasise that customers trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations, how important it is to have a good overall star rating, and how crucial it is to have recent reviews.

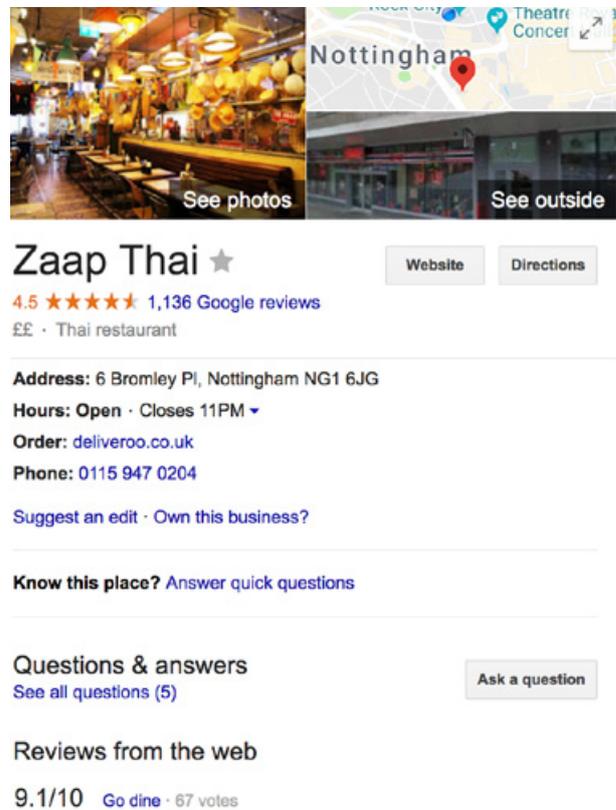
Reviews are also important because they help local businesses to:

- Improve local rankings
- Improve conversion rates and increase sales
- Improve their site's appearance in the SERPs (and therefore click-through rates) by displaying rich snippets such as the below:



Hudson Moody: Estate Agents York | Lettings Agents York
<https://www.hudson-moody.com/>
 We are an award winning independent firm of Estate and Letting Agents specialising in residential property for sale and rent in York and surrounding villages.

Star ratings in the local pack and organic listings for “estate agents york”:



Star ratings and Facebook aggregate score pulled through into the Knowledge Panel for “zaap thai Nottingham”:

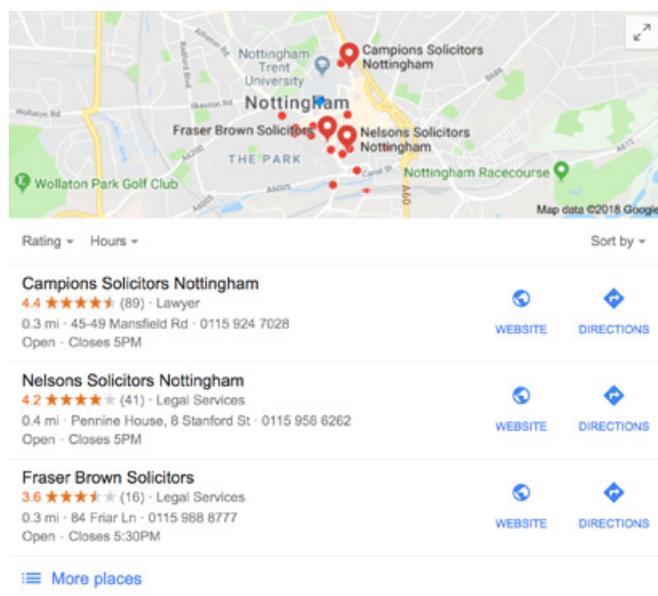
So how do you go about putting a robust strategy in place for your business?



Audit current online reviews and reviews process

The first step is to do a thorough audit of all the reviews that you currently have, and all the platforms on which they are found. A simple [brand name] + reviews search will help you here.

Then move on to identify what the most important sites in your particular niche are. You may already think you know what these are but it's important to check which ones Google thinks are important. To do this, simply search Google for: "industry keyword" reviews. For example, the search for "solicitors reviews" from my location in Nottingham gives me the following results:



Judging by the sites ranking for this phrase, various sites are being flagged as potentially important for solicitors in Nottingham who want to build their review profile.

If you're still not sure what the most influential review sites are, then some competitor research will come in handy. If most of your competitors are being reviewed on a particular site and you aren't, then that site needs to be added to your list!

You can then make a list of influential review sites and it may be helpful at this point to rank them in order of importance.

Next, think about how you currently go about gaining reviews (if at all). Is there any sort of process in place already? How successful has that been so far?

Solicitors Nottingham | Nelsons Solicitors in Nottingham
<https://www.nelsonslaw.co.uk/find-us/nelsons-solicitors-nottingham/>
Our specialist team of solicitors in Nottingham have provided legal services to the area for over 30 years. Our lawyers can help you with all your legal issues ...

Bhatia Best: Solicitors Nottingham, Derby & Mansfield
www.bhatiabest.co.uk/
Bhatia Best is a leading UK law firm with offices in Nottingham, Derby and Mansfield. We provide exceptional legal services at affordable rates.



Decide which platform(s) to focus on

In order to give your reviews strategy direction, you'll need to decide which platforms you're going to focus on, depending on your business needs and your target customers.

For some types of local businesses, it may be important to have a presence on several review sites, for others you may be able to focus on one or two. Obviously, you don't want to dilute your efforts too much. You also need to make it as easy as possible for people to review you, so focus on the platforms your customers are already using. These could be:

- [Google Reviews](#)
- Facebook
- 3rd party sites like Trust Pilot, TripAdvisor and Yell
- Sites specific to your niche or location (e.g. <http://www.solicitor.info> and <http://www.nottingham.co.uk/solicitors> in the example above)

Here's a checklist to help prioritise your list and make a decision:

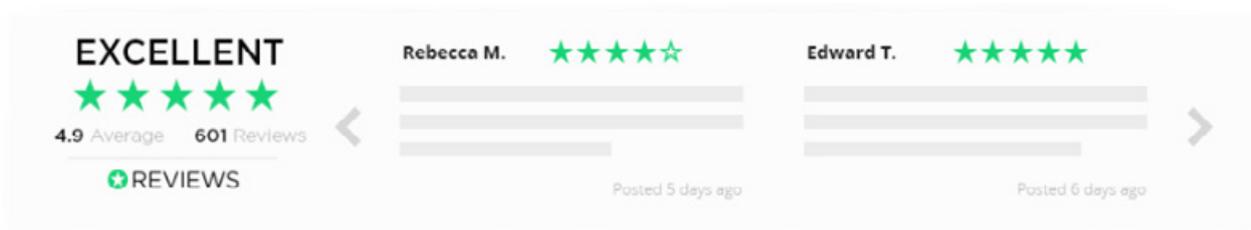
- What are the rules of engagement for each review platform? Some sites have specific rules about how and where you can ask for reviews, such as Yelp. Google on the other hand is happy for you to approach customers for reviews but they can remove reviews filled out within your store or office, if they register too many reviews from the same IP address.
- How easy is it to leave a review on the site? Would your customers need to create an account?
- Is it a free service? If not, how much does it cost and what do you get for your money?



How do you want to integrate reviews with your website?

If you're making a concerted effort to gain reviews, you need to shout about them on your website too.

As well as having a testimonials and/or case studies page, you could include a reviews page on your site that links to all the websites where customers can read reviews. This may include Google reviews, reviews on 3rd party websites, Facebook, and any other platforms important to your customers. You'll need to check the policies of the platforms you plan to feature, and any widgets/badges available for displaying reviews on your own website, such as the below from reviews.co.uk:



You could also consider collecting reviews directly on your own website. Local search expert Miriam Ellis recently wrote a very [interesting blog](#) about creating onsite reviews pages, and in particular how businesses can utilise “hybrid sentiment” – essentially creating a review+testimonial functionality on their own company websites and the potential benefits of this. She says: “Things are changing! More sophisticated local businesses are now employing technologies that blur the lines between reviews and testimonials. Website-based applications can enable users to leave reviews directly on-site, they can contain star ratings, avatars, and even owner responses”.



Deciding on platforms and how to integrate reviews into your website also ties into schema markup. The rules surrounding schema markup for reviews can be quite confusing, but the important thing to remember for local businesses is that you're only allowed to mark up customer reviews with schema if they are unique to your website. You're not allowed to mark up reviews on your site from 3rd party sources, as these are not unique to your site. Google offers the following guidance for local businesses:

Google may display information from aggregate ratings markup in the Google Knowledge Cards. The following guidelines apply to review snippets in knowledge cards for local businesses:

- Snippets must not be written or provided by the business or content provider unless they are genuine, independent, and unpaid editorial reviews.
- Reviews must allow for customers to express both positive and negative sentiments. They may not be vetted by the business or restricted by the content provider based on the positive/negative sentiment of the review before submission to Google.
- Reviews cannot be template sentences built from data or automated metrics. For example, the following is not acceptable: "Based on X number of responses, on average people experienced X with this business."
- Reviews for multiple-location businesses such as retail chains or franchises can only be submitted for the specific business location for which they were written. In other words, reviews for multiple-location businesses cannot be syndicated or applied to all business locations of the same company.
- Aggregators or content providers must have no commercial agreements paid or otherwise with businesses to provide reviews.
- Do not include reviews that are duplicate or similar reviews across many businesses or from different sources.
- Only include reviews that have been directly produced by your site, not reviews from third-party sites or syndicated reviews.

These guidelines are quite different from rules that were in place previously. Mike Blumenthal has written a [useful post](#) for GetFiveStars on this topic which you should read before embarking on any attempts to markup your reviews. Make sure you read the comments too!

So ultimately, to gain rich snippet star ratings on your organic results or for your own website to become a "reviews from the web" source in Google's knowledge cards, you need to generate unique reviews on your site and know how to [implement schema correctly](#).



How are you going to encourage customers to leave reviews?

So now you have your research in place, you know which platforms you're going to focus on, you've decided whether or not to generate reviews directly on your site (and the research here suggests that you should certainly be considering this!), next you need to think about how you're going to approach your customers for reviews.

Here are some recommended tactics to help put your process in place:

- Prime a customer to review you from the beginning of your relationship, letting them know that their evaluation of your service is welcome and expected. For example, you could include this in any materials you share with your customers that describe the way you work, and during any phone calls with the customer ensure that you mention that you are keen to earn a referral.
- Remind the customer to review you at the end of the transaction. How this will be carried out will depend on how you do business, but be explicit in your ask.
- Decide how you're going to collect reviews on an ongoing basis. Don't do a big push initially and then forget about them – according to research the recency of your reviews is almost as important as the quality and average score.
- For some businesses, it may be best to give your customers a choice of platforms to review from. For others, you may want to focus on one platform or your own website in order to maximise numbers and trigger star ratings in the SERPs, for instance.
- Some review platforms allow you to contact customers through their own system with a branded email. You could also create your own email marketing campaign to get in touch with customers.

At what point in the customer journey you ask for a review also needs to be considered and will vary from business to business. A digital marketing agency like Hallam would not ask a customer to leave a review straight away, of course, as we need to build up the relationship first and perform good work for them. Our process is more long term and we focus on gaining reviews at various points throughout the customer's relationship with us, such as at their six month review, ad hoc when we have received great feedback, or after a specific project is completed. On the other hand a local restaurant will want to request a review from their customer much more quickly.

Finally, make sure that you share an agreed strategy with everyone in your business to get everyone on board, as they will be vital in gaining positive reviews moving forward.



Some things you must never do

- Use review stations in your place of business.
- Pay a third party to post a review on behalf of anyone else. Customers must leave their own reviews using their own accounts.
- Create fake reviews for your business or pay someone else to.
- It's also important not to try and get too many reviews at once as that could be a red flag to review sites and/or Google that you are gaining spam reviews.

How will reviews fit into your overall marketing strategy?

There's a lot to be gained from collecting online reviews, some of which will feed into your overall marketing strategy.

Customer reviews serve two purposes; they are a marketing tool but they also gather valuable feedback you can use for service development and your future marketing efforts. So make sure you actually read all your reviews!

In order to make the most of the reviews you do get, ensure that you have a plan for promoting new reviews on social media, on your website and in your marketing materials.



9.

4 Ways that you can incorporate video into your digital marketing strategy

Cisco predicted that by 2021, 82% of the global internet will be video traffic. Considering that viewers are around 85% more likely to buy products after watching a video, this is one element of the marketing mix that B2Bs can't afford to ignore.

In this chapter, we will be looking at 4 types of video that B2Bs can create; but first of all, let's take a look at why using video should be on your agenda for 2018.



Benefits of video for digital marketing

Videos help to build trust

Humans have a desire to connect and interact, something which can be hard to do with the sheer amount of content – especially written – that's online. Videos can help to give a face to your business, making your B2B more relatable and trustworthy. Creating video content showcasing your customers' stories or products can add an element of transparency and authenticity, helping you to connect with your prospects or consumers.

Videos grab attention

The average attention span has been dropping for years, [and in 2015 was reported to be just 8 seconds](#). Guess what the average attention span of a goldfish is?! 9 seconds. But don't despair! According to Statistic Brain, the [average length watched of a video is 2.7 minutes](#) – that's plenty of time to get your key messages across.

Videos help consumers convert

Add a video to your landing page, and you could potentially improve conversions by 80%! On top of this, after watching a product video, 64% of viewers are likely to purchase that product online. Consider the above stats, and you have 2.7 minutes to get your audience to convert.

Videos increase engagement metrics

Adding interactive content to your website not only improves user experience by helping users to understand your products or services, it also keeps visitors on your site longer. Engagement metrics such as bounce rate and dwell time have a significant effect on rankings.



Types of videos for your digital marketing strategy

Now that we've looked at some of the top benefits, here are 4 ways that you can incorporate video into your digital marketing strategy.

Client testimonials / case studies

Customer success stories are without a doubt one of the most effective and powerful trust signals most B2Bs have at their disposal. They allow you to quickly communicate your trust and reliability, giving consumers the confidence to move towards the next step in the buying cycle.

The way that most case studies are formatted makes them ideal for turning into multimedia content including infographics and videos, expanding their reach to wider audiences.

Video case studies let your happy clients do the talking for you, telling the story from their point of view; which adds credibility and authenticity to your brand.

Case study video example: <https://youtu.be/RGWw8-tJh7>

Explainer videos

Explainer videos are a great way to summarise an issue or problem someone might be having: explain how your solution can help them and introduce your brand in a short amount of time. On top of this, [4 in 5 consumers believe that demo videos are helpful](#).

You can record a video that shows your product in action or emphasises a pain point. If the benefits of your product or service aren't immediately obvious or are too complex to get across with copy, then try an explainer video.

You don't necessarily need to spend a fortune on video production either, as there are various screen recording tools out there to record how your product works. There are a couple of things that you should keep in mind when recording your explainer video:

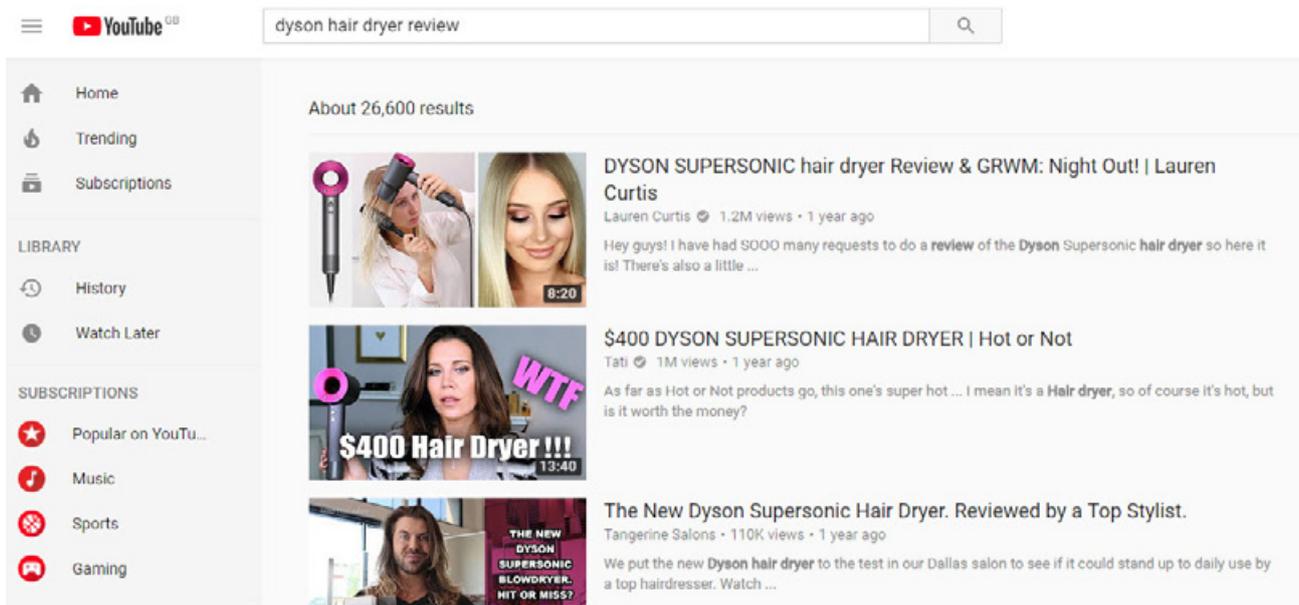
- Try and keep your videos under 90 seconds (around 200 words or less when transcribed)
- Use the typical rule of thumb: no more than 150 words per minute
- Don't be put off by thinking that your product isn't interesting enough – there's a market for everything!

Explainer video example: <https://youtu.be/mJeNghZXtMo>



Review videos

Searches for product reviews have been growing for years, however, in the past two years, they have grown over 35%. According to Google, [videos with the word “review” in the title had more than 50,000 years worth of watch time on mobile alone](#). This indicates that a huge proportion of people are looking for video reviews.



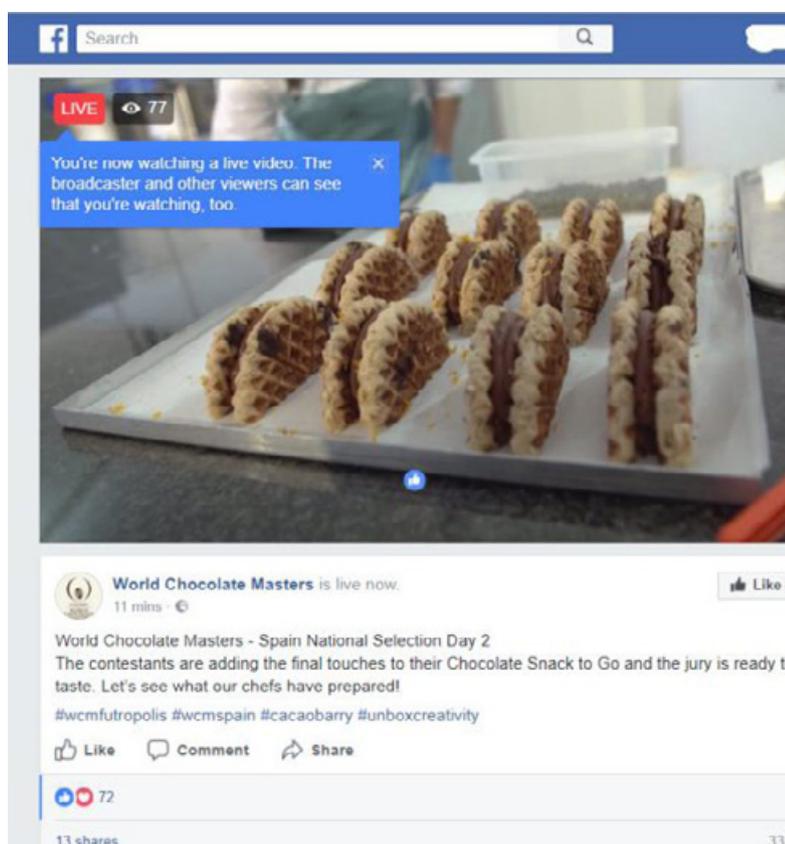
Understandably reviews can be difficult to obtain, let alone in video format. However, if you're in a position to offer a free product in exchange for a video review then you should leverage this opportunity by finding influencers in your industry.



Live video

Live video has taken off over the last few years thanks to Facebook Live and Twitter's Periscope. It's a format that's immersive and easy to consume – perfect for 8-second attention spans! And according to Livestream, [80% of audiences would rather watch live video from a brand than read a blog](#), and 82% prefer live video from a brand to social posts.

A raw representation of yourself or your brand, without any edits, a live video can help with connecting with audiences on a more personal level. In addition, by offering your followers something that isn't available to everyone else, you're also adding an element of exclusivity.



Think that live video is something only big retailers or brands can do? Think again! Here are some ways that many businesses can use live video:

- Sales demos
- Q&A sessions
- New product launches
- Showroom tours
- Competitions

If you're looking for some inspiration, check out [Facebook's live map](#) to tune in to streams in real-time.

Conclusion

Video's ability to connect and resonate with wide audiences, increase conversion rates and improve SEO means that this is a key content marketing format that you can't afford to miss out on.



10.

3 ways to save money & boost PPC conversions

What percentage of your paid advertising costs go down the drain?

With these simple beginners' guides, you can discover which parts of your PPC account are the biggest money-drainers, and find out what to do with them.

Plug the holes in your PPC account with the guides below



1. Wasted keyword costs

Below are the steps to take to identify any wasteful keywords on search or shopping campaigns:

1. Click the **Campaigns** tab at the top
2. Select **All Campaigns** or a specific campaign in the top left of the page
3. Click the **Keywords** tab
4. Underneath this tab select **Search Terms**
5. Sort the results by the biggest **Cost**
6. Look at the **Search Terms** people have entered which bring up your ads, do they all match up with your offering?

The target keywords that trigger ads can have [one of three match types](#): exact, phrase, and broad.

Bidding on exact match keywords is a safe bet, as the ad will only appear when that exact keyword is searched for, and nothing else. The disadvantage to this is that people use hundreds or thousands of different search queries for the same topic. To capture them all, you also have to bid on phrase and broad match keywords.

Use negative keywords to stop unwanted queries from triggering the ads. Otherwise, your ads may show for topics or niches in which you don't want them to appear, which will likely result in wasted clicks.

For example, say you sell brand new parachutes, and you bid for the phrase match keyword "parachute for sale". There would be wasted PPC costs on searches such as "used parachutes for sale", or "ripped parachutes for sale". As the words "used" and "ripped" would bring visitors with the wrong intent to the website, these would be best added to your [negative keyword list](#):

parachutes for sale	Exact match	Added	Parachutes campaign	Parachutes for sale
parachutes on sale	Exact match (close variant)	None	Parachutes campaign	Parachutes for sale
parachute for sale	Exact match (close variant)	None	Parachutes campaign	Parachutes for sale
used parachutes for sale	Phrase match	None	Parachutes campaign	Parachutes for sale
ripped parachutes for sale	Phrase match	None	Parachutes campaign	Parachutes for sale
reserve parachutes for sale	Phrase match	None	Parachutes campaign	Parachutes for sale

Example search terms report with bad terms highlighted



2. Campaign settings issues

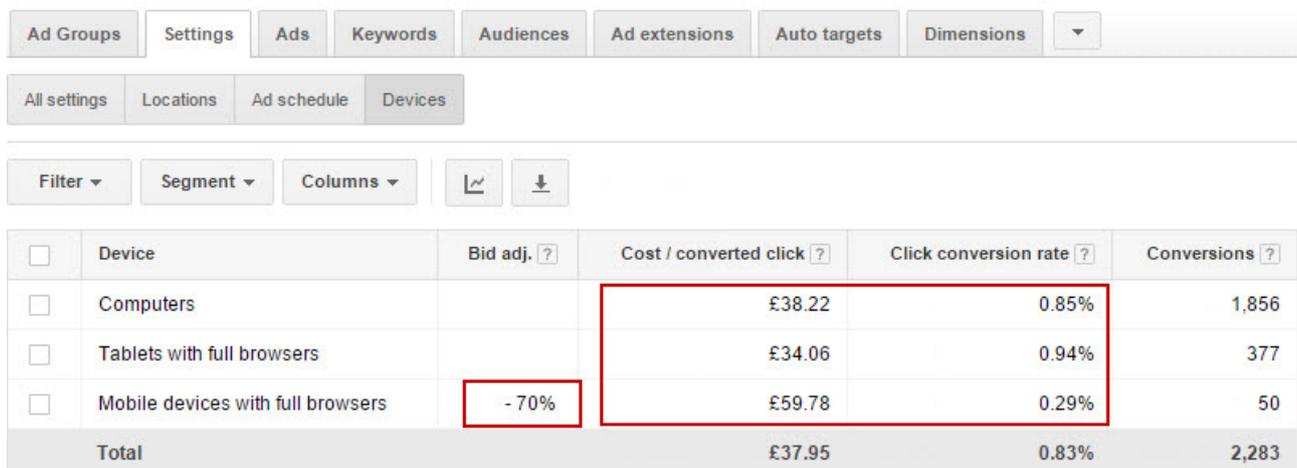
Below are the main areas to check in the campaign settings for any obvious issues:

1. Click the **Campaigns** tab at the top
2. Select a specific campaign in the top left of the page
3. Clicks the **Settings** tab
4. If not already set, edit the campaign **Type** and select **All Features**
5. Your campaign settings will vary across different types of websites. Below are the main settings which should be checked to ensure your ads aren't being shown to the wrong people, or to people who are unlikely to convert:

Devices – Is your website mobile friendly? If not, then it might be worth reducing the bids for people using mobile devices, or turning off mobile advertising altogether.

If you have conversion tracking installed through Google Ads, or passed to Google Ads from Analytics goals, then you can see how effective mobile traffic really is.

To turn off mobile ads, simply set the bid adjustment to -100%:



	Ad Groups	Settings	Ads	Keywords	Audiences	Ad extensions	Auto targets	Dimensions	
	All settings	Locations	Ad schedule	Devices					
	Filter	Segment	Columns						
<input type="checkbox"/>	Device	Bid adj. ?	Cost / converted click ?	Click conversion rate ?	Conversions ?				
<input type="checkbox"/>	Computers		£38.22	0.85%	1,856				
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tablets with full browsers		£34.06	0.94%	377				
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mobile devices with full browsers	- 70%	£59.78	0.29%	50				
	Total		£37.95	0.83%	2,283				

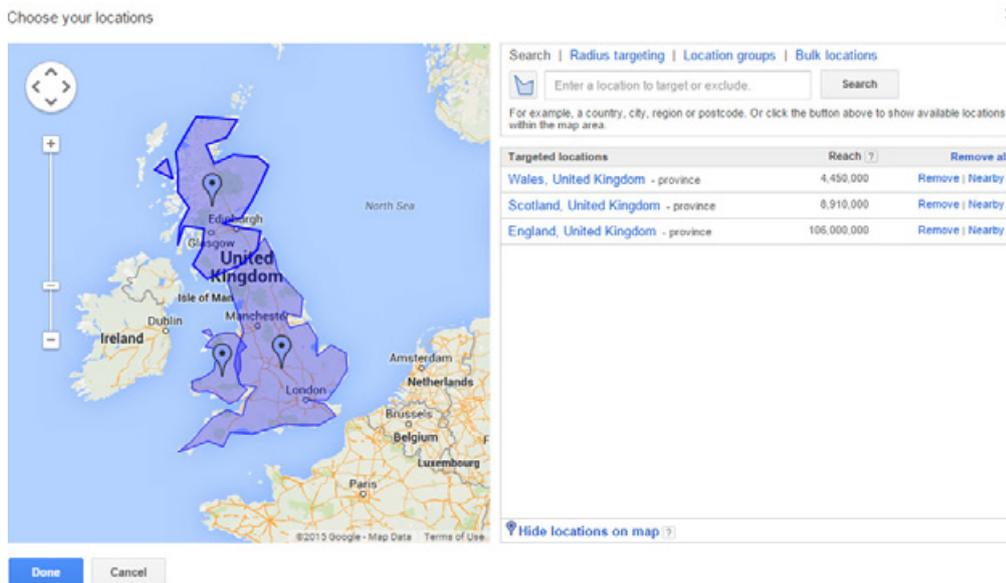
Mobile bid adjustment set to -70% (click this area to edit it)



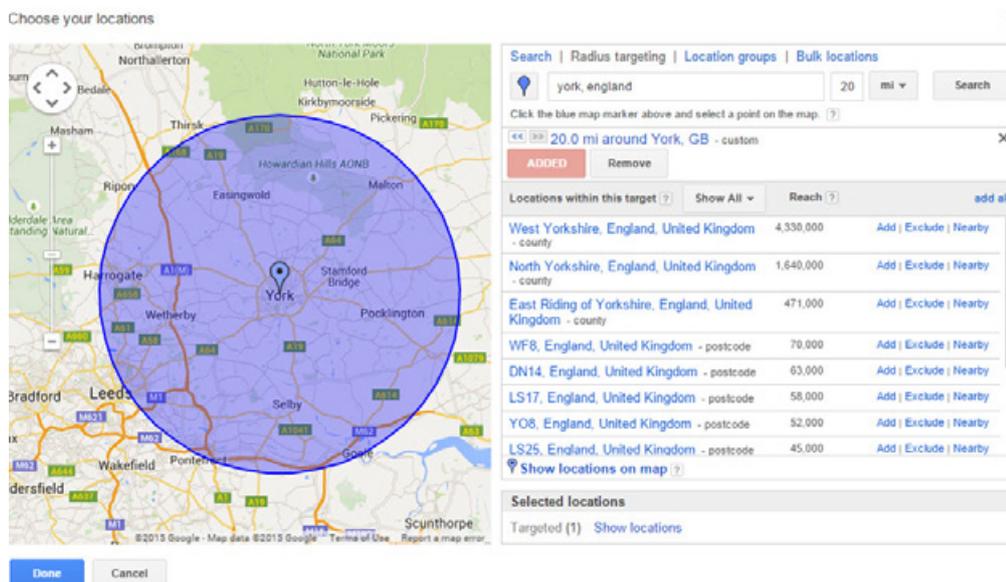
Location – Is your website targeting at a local, regional, or national level?

You can be very specific in targeting different locations within Google Ads and Bing Ads. For example, if a British website doesn't want visitors from Northern Ireland, they would need to target just the countries England, Scotland and Wales, rather than the whole of the UK.

If you supply to a limited 20 mile radius from your business, then use the radius targeting in the "Advanced Search" link. You can always see the target locations on the map from here:



Just the countries England, Scotland and Wales targeted

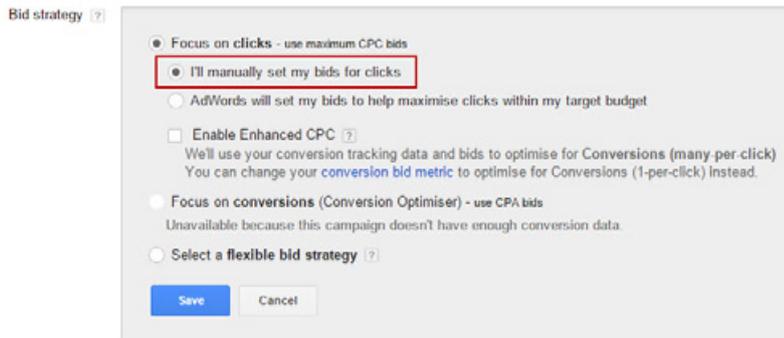


20 miles radius around York, UK targeted



Bid strategy – If your campaign is focused on clicks, then don't use automatic bidding.

Automatic bidding places all the keyword bids at the same level within the campaign to try and get as many clicks as possible. [The trouble with this setting](#) is that competitive keywords are stifled, and less competitive keywords are over-promoted:



Ensure that you are using manual bids to have control on the individual keyword bids

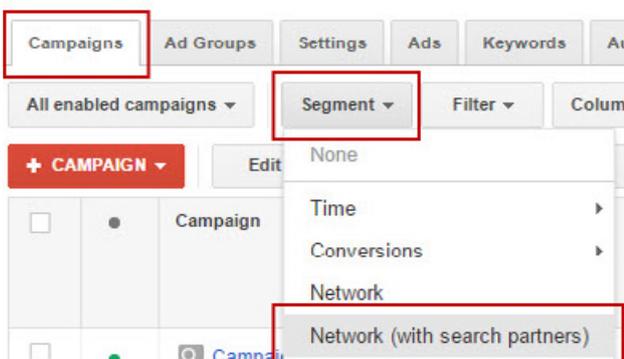
Type & Networks – The campaign type for search ads can be “Search Network only” or “Search Network with Display Select”.

We generally see worse results when Display Select search ads are activated, so it's best to select “Search Network only” here to reduce wasted ad spend on text display ads.

For “Networks”, it may or may not be a good idea to “Include search partners”. These are other websites apart from Google which use Google Ads, such as YouTube, Gmail, AOL, etc.

If you have conversion tracking installed through Google Ads or passed to Google Ads from Analytics goals, then you see the statistics for when search partners are used or not. Click “All online campaigns”, then the “Segment” drop-down, and choose “Network (with search partners)”.

All online campaigns



At the bottom of the page you can now see statistics on both networks within the “Total – search” expandable results:



The route to reveal the search partner statistics

	Campaign	Clicks [?] ↓	Impr. [?]	CTR [?]	Avg. CPC [?]	Cost [?]	Avg. Pos. [?]	Converted clicks [?]	Cost / converted click [?]	Click conversion rate [?]
	Total - search [?]	728,120	19,324,988	3.77%	£0.31	£228,084.82	2.1	3,621	£37.52	0.89%
	Google Search	631,620	11,793,895	5.36%	£0.32	£201,869.41	1.9	3,430	£36.07	0.94%
	Search partners	96,500	7,531,093	1.28%	£0.27	£26,215.41	2.3	191	£63.51	0.45%

For this account search partners delivers worse results than Google's own search and is a drain on the ad spend

Languages – It's very important to set the same language for all your ad content. In all countries of the world there will be people using search engines with different language settings, even if the language used isn't native to that country.



3. Keyword quality scores for overly expensive clicks

Below are the steps to take to identify any low quality keywords on search campaigns:

1. Click the **Campaigns** tab at the top
2. Select **All Campaigns** or a specific campaign in the top left of the page
3. Click the **Keywords** tab
4. Click the **Columns** drop-down and then **Modify Columns**
5. Within the metrics select **Attributes** and then add **Qual.** score
6. Apply the changes
7. Click on the **Qual.** score column to sort the results from lowest to highest
8. Hover over the **Status** bubble to see why individual keywords have a bad quality score

Each keyword's quality score has a massive effect on the cost of advertising for that individual keyword. The lower the quality score, the higher advertising costs will be to maintain the same position in the ads.

The minimum quality score you should expect is 7/10, which is the most common score for keywords within Google Ads. Quality scores are a little higher on Bing Ads, and a score of 8/10 is the most common.

The quality score can fall below these numbers if:

- The keyword doesn't match up to the landing page
- The keyword doesn't match up to the advert
- The advert doesn't match up to the landing page
- [The advert doesn't get clicked on as often as it should](#)
- The campaign doesn't use ad extensions such as sitelinks or callouts

Video from Google partners: How to improve AdWords quality score

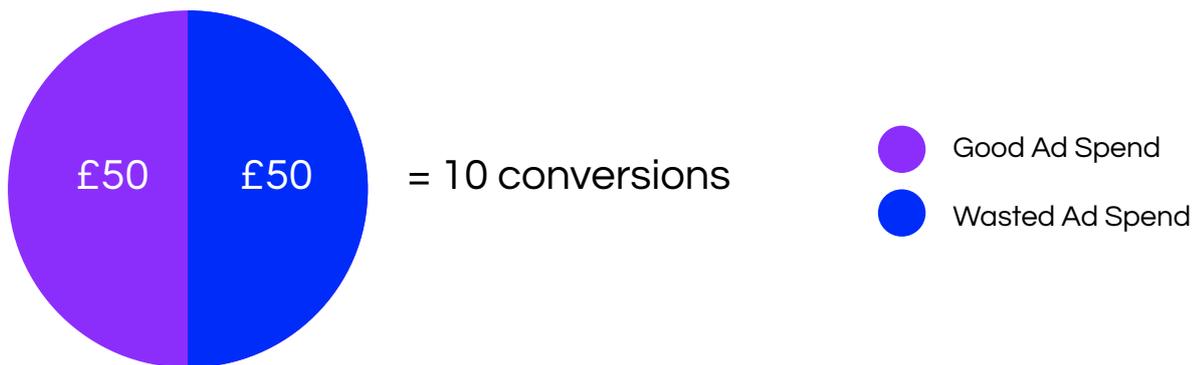
<https://youtu.be/P6RfDHpsyPg>



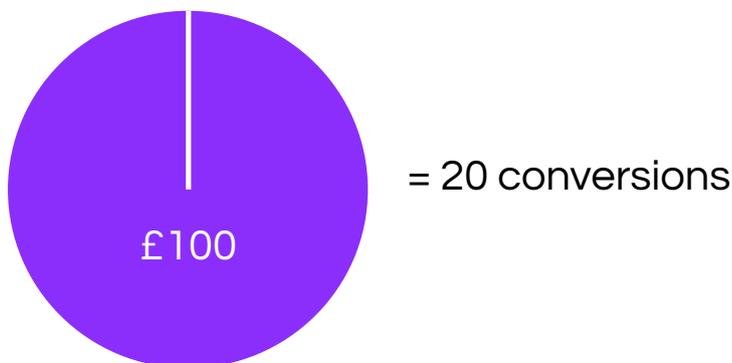
Why saving PPC costs matters

Saving money on wasted ad spend allows you to boost useful ad spend further to get a greater number of overall sales.

For example, let's say you found that half of your limited ad spend was wasted. Removing this would allow you to double the number of conversions using the same daily budget:



Half the budget is wasted, resulting in 10 conversions



None of the budget is wasted, resulting in 20 conversions for the same overall spend

If the daily ad spend is unlimited, then cutting out this waste will increase your [profitability levels](#) from PPC, reducing the cost per conversion.

More advanced PPC techniques such as bid adjustments can be used to squeeze even more profit out of PPC once the account is running smoothly. There is always room for improvement.

Even if you don't manage your own PPC account, it's worth taking a look at these three key areas to see if any PPC costs can be saved. You might be surprised with the results!



11.

Brand awareness strategies for small businesses

Building brand awareness should be at the top of any marketing strategy. After all, why would customers purchase from you if they have no understanding of your brand, let alone trust in it?

The question is, how can you create brand awareness quickly, efficiently and cost-effectively as a small business? If your overarching goal is to increase sales, you must start by increasing your awareness and exposure online. As both B2B and B2C sectors become more and more competitive, it is becoming increasingly difficult to cut through the noise.

Below we have put together our strategies to increase brand awareness for small businesses. But first it is important to mention your brand itself – if you do not have brand values that differentiate yourself from your competitors, you will find reaching your goals very challenging. To understand how you can portray the value of your brand, read our post on the [power of digital branding](#).



1. The long-tail approach to SEO

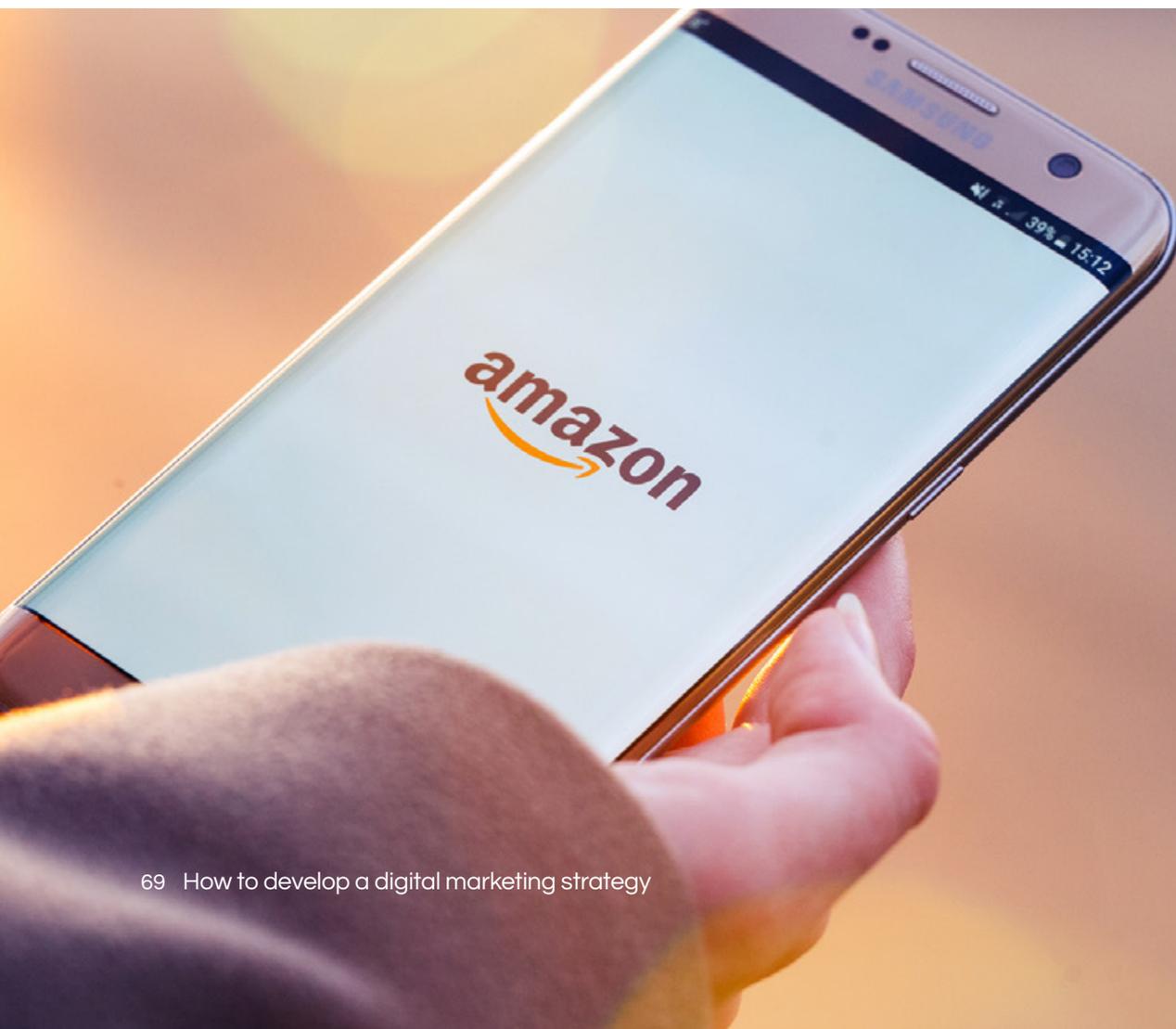
Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) should be one of your first marketing pillars when delivering a brand awareness strategy.

We're also sure that when reading this, you're thinking that SEO is hardly a revolutionary plan. However, the way in which you conduct your SEO may change based on this.

The key is to stop focusing on the high-traffic terms that are highly competitive and will take a long time to rank for. A better approach is to focus on long-tail terms which are less competitive and have lower traffic volumes. With this approach, a large volume of these long-tail keywords will equal the higher traffic counterparts and will take a lot less time to rank for.

Business example:

Amazon, a giant in the ecommerce world: but did you know that more than half of its book sales come from long-tail searches? [Search Engine Guide found that 57% of all Amazon book sales do not come from core or popular phrases.](#) According to Neil Patel, Amazon's successful execution of this has come from its detailed and long-tail focused product descriptions.



2. Google ads display advertising

AdWords display advertising refers to the 2 million plus websites that make up the Google Display Network or GDN. The GDN is by far the largest contextual advertising network in the world, allowing advertisers a massive choice of ad formats and targeting methods.

Display advertising is perfect for generating awareness due to three main benefits: firstly, they are visually appealing, allowing you to tell your story through images and copy. Secondly, they are extremely cost-effective, with some industries recording a cost-per-click of only £0.05. Thirdly, they allow for detailed and granular targeting methods. Find out more about [Google display ads here](#), or alternatively, read our beginners guide to [Display Advertising](#).

Business example:

[Airbnb used Google Display Advertising](#) to geographically target potential consumers through the GDN and the results were staggering. With the goal to 'open the world to travel', Airbnb needed to be able to advertise effectively. Google Display Advertising allowed Airbnb to become an international brand by increasing their reach and targeting audiences at a granular level. The result is that Airbnb now has more than 80,000 listings worldwide.



3. Referral schemes

Referral schemes are often overlooked as a key marketing strategy, especially for brand awareness. But the best advocates of your brand are the customers who already know and trust you.

Offering currently engaged customers an incentive to invite their friends and family is the perfect way to not only increase awareness of your brand, but also increase your sales.

Business example:

The most well-known example of a brand that increased growth through a referral strategy is Dropbox, and they are frequently cited for doing so. Dropbox's strategy was simple: 'invite your friends and we will give you 16GB of free data'. This is how they grew from 100,000 signups to 4,000,000 in 15 months.



Get up to 16 GB free space by inviting your friends to Dropbox!

For every friend who joins and installs Dropbox on their computer, we'll give you both 500 MB of bonus space (up to a limit of 16 GB)!
If you need even more space, [upgrade your account](#)



 **Invite your Gmail contacts** OR  **Send**

 We won't store your password and your contacts are secure.



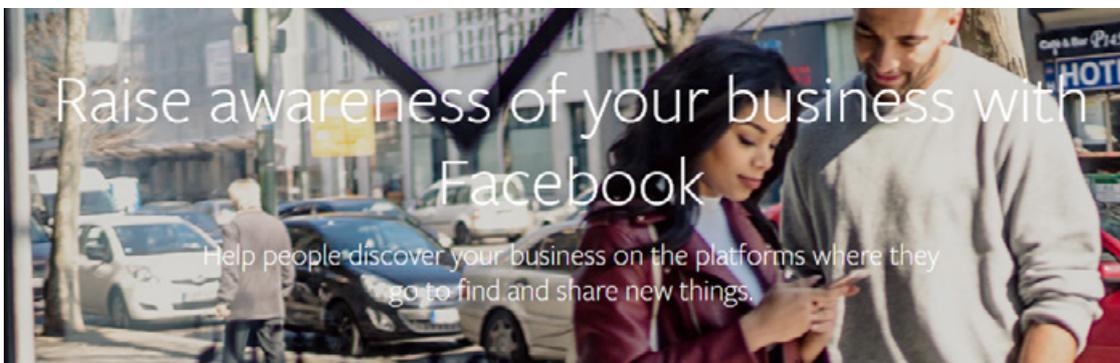
4. Social media advertising

Social media advertising, similar to SEO, is not a new strategy for brand awareness.

However, it has seen continual improvement in making it a cost-effective strategy. The biggest improvements from social media advertising have come from the detailed targeting methods that are now available, meaning you can drill-down to the exact target audience you would like to show your ads to. LinkedIn has led the granular targeting race for some time with its B2B abilities, but Facebook has started to catch the leader with its very own detailed methods. To find out more about social media advertising, read our post on Facebook advertising tips and our explanation of LinkedIn advertising, to understand how both of these advertising platforms can help you reach your consumers.

Business example:

[Furniturespot](#) connects craftsmen and women from South Africa with people who want custom furniture, whilst supporting local tradespeople. With a combination of audience insights, video and carousel ads, this led to a 45% growth month-on-month. You've probably never come across Furniturespot, but it will give you an insight into how [Facebook advertising can support small and medium businesses](#).



Some of you may have come across the [Holiday Inn's humorous LinkedIn campaign featuring Jim Gaffigan](#), but the results were not laughable. Using LinkedIn sponsored updates and LinkedIn showcase pages, Holiday Inn targeted frequent travellers in the sales and consulting industry with videos of Jim Gaffigan asking travellers about their previous stays with the hotel chain. Within just [40 days, the Holiday Inn LinkedIn page grew to 1,600 followers](#) (from 7 followers), and increased engagement and click-through rates to twice that on the LinkedIn benchmark.



5. Produce engaging & informative content

Content marketing – whether in the form of a blog post, video, online article or “how to” guide – is an imperative piece of marketing which leads the user to taking an action.

This action could be reading more about the company, making a purchase, or sharing your content with their friends. Whichever action they take, they’re still informing themselves about your brand, and this is the key component to making yourself renowned.

Some examples of engaging content would be:

1. Benefit content: “How to...” guides, “Top tips...” and “21 ways...” are great for peaking interest. It’s information they didn’t know they needed but now they know it, it’s invaluable.
2. Factorial/News: News about the industry is an opportunity to gain backlinks from others in the field. It’s giving the customer more faith in the product, but there’s also the potential to engage the linked company’s audience too.
3. Pillar pieces of content: These articles not only increase your SEO traffic, they can inform and engage at the same time. As they’re 2000+ words long, it’s perfect for getting in lots of long-tail keywords which will help to drive traffic.

Business example:

Husband and wife duo Justin and Ariele Champion founded their charitable brand [Wild We Wander](#) in order to encourage others to spread positivity and acts of kindness whilst on their travels. These acts of kindness have generated thousands of pounds for charity, whilst giving a nod to the digital nomad lifestyle by producing pillar pieces of content. This editorial in particular gives the reader the inside scoop on how to customise their camper, whilst still keeping them enthused about the brand and wanting to see where they’re travelling to next – a thrill-seeking and charitable cause.



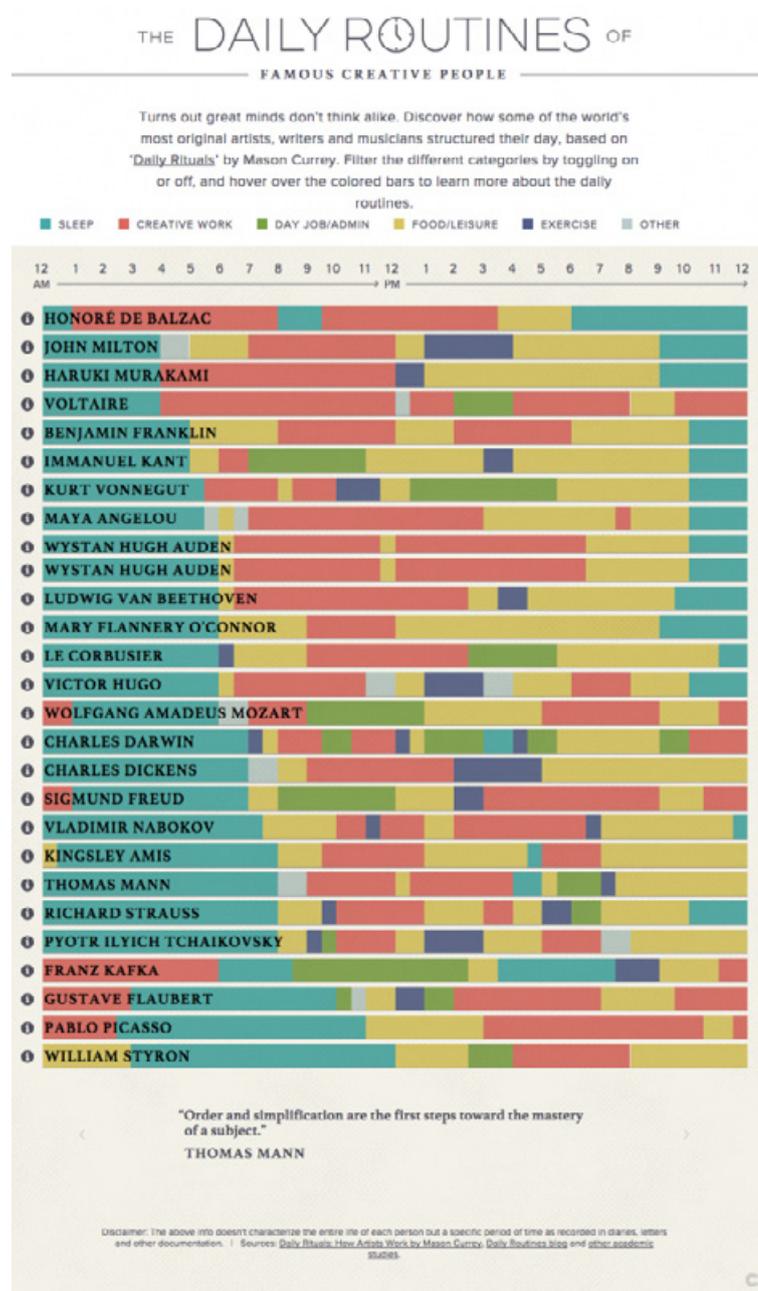
6. Infographics

Infographics are graphic representations of key statistics and analytics displayed in a fun, creative and often colourful manner.

Ranging from survey statistics, demonstrating the knowledge of a subject, or simply to spread brand awareness; infographics are content powerhouses that are high on the sharing spectrum.

Business example:

[Workflow and project management system Podio](#) executed a survey with a group of famous creatives to find out their daily rituals. Knowing their audience like the back of their hand, this interactive piece of content was indeed popular with their target audience of young working professionals. Not only is it engaging with their targeted audience, but it's a fantastic editorial example that can be shared on social channels.



Final thoughts

We hope this gives you some inspiration as to what strategies you can employ to gain effective brand awareness for your business.

As these strategies work for both well-known and relatively unknown brands; there are learnings that can be taken and implemented for your business.



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