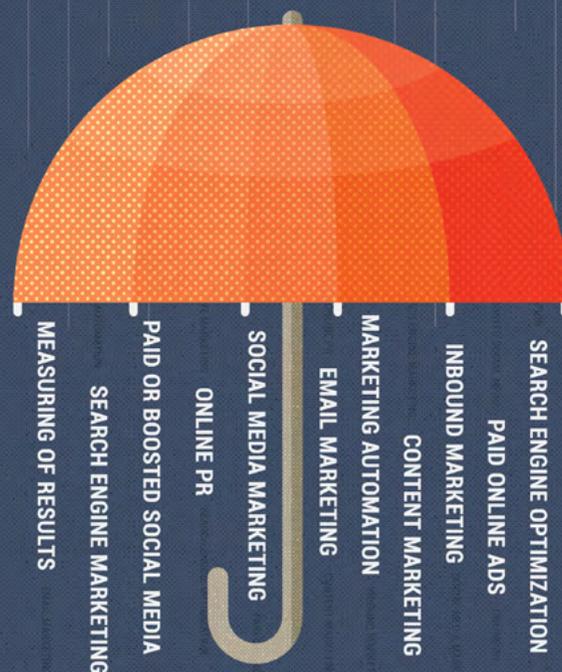


WHITE PAPER

Digital Marketing. The Medium That Can Make You Extra Large.

by **Bree Basham**



For most people digital strategy isn't the first thing that comes to mind when they think of marketing. But in a world of mobile first, digital should not come as an afterthought. Marketing has always been about connecting with your audience in the right place and at the right time, and your audience is most certainly online. In fact, people are online so much more today that traditional marketing is now far less effective than it once was.

Digital marketing can be defined as any marketing that employs a form of electronic media. It is a term typically used as an umbrella to cover all online marketing efforts. Since it includes multiple channels, digital marketing plays a strong role in setting the stage for a compelling and robust brand experience.

Think about the hottest brands with lots of buzz—many have a strong online proposition. Brands we love, like Warby Parker and One Kings Lane, use their web sites as their business hub and also to fulfill their purpose. But the websites aren't the whole picture. These enlightened brands attract customers through other digital channels as well, whether it be a social media ad or boosted post, a promo email offer, or a follow-up with a retargeting ad. There may even be an in-home direct mailer or tie-in to an in-store promotion. The combination of these multiple triggers is what creates a complete and effective strategy.

Your website functions as the hub of your digital strategy, and as such, is a critical part of any brand experience. We believe your site should be one that attracts, informs, and engages your visitors. It also brings your dream clients into your site. It builds trust by educating them and persuading them to engage based on which stage of the buying cycle they are in.

Consider these 4 advantages to a digital marketing strategy:

1. Measurement. It's smart! Use of the channels and methods used in digital marketing enables the analysis of marketing campaigns that shed light on what's working and what's not—typically in real time. This offers the luxury of evaluating performance and refining strategy as you go, easily and instantly.

2. Cost. It's cheap! Compared to traditional media, digital is pennies on the dollar. And in many cases, you pay per click, which means if your strategy isn't working, it also isn't costing you much—and you have the opportunity to shift that strategy to one that's worth the investment.

3. Pervasiveness. It's everywhere! Compare digital advertising to outdoor advertising—imagine how long it might take you to drive by a certain billboard on a certain road, and happen to look out your window at a certain time, versus being targeted online and having an ad come directly to you via a digital space you already frequent.

4. Targeting. It's pinpointed! In social marketing, you can target by demographics, interests, and location. For example, if you're interested in men, 35-44 in greater Chicago who enjoy DIY, you'll be able to find that exact sub-set on Facebook. This increases engagement and ensures your content is relevant to your audience. What's more, you can upload your own email list to almost any social media platform and find your customers there.

Tactically, digital marketing includes (but is not limited to):

- Search Engine Optimization
- Search Engine Marketing
- Inbound Marketing (Attraction, Engagement, and Conversion of Leads)
- Content Marketing
- Marketing Automation
- Email Marketing
- Social Media Marketing
- Online PR
- Paid or Boosted Social Media
- Paid Online Ads
- Measuring of Results

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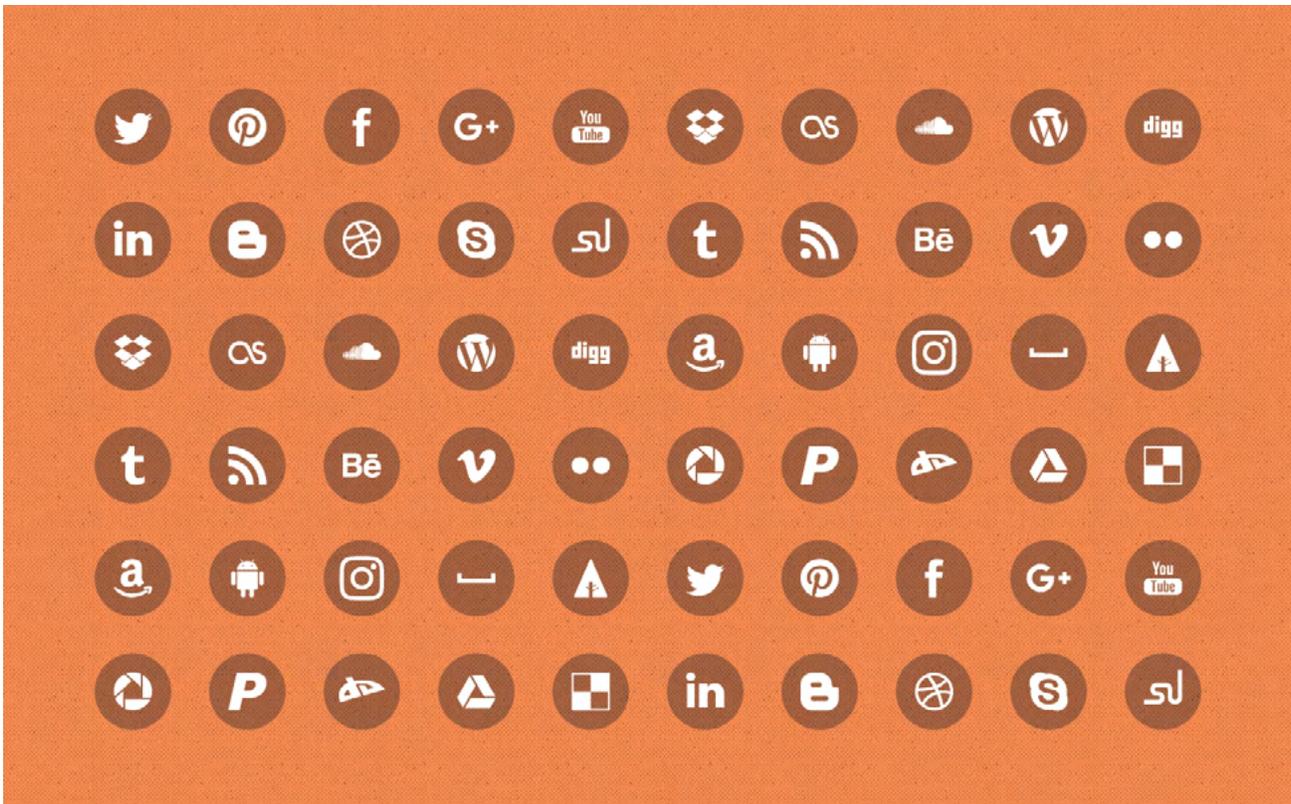
We also believe in adding unique content to your site on a continuing basis. If your site is an engine, content is the gasoline that fuels it. Content elevates your non-branded search results in Google and makes the search engine crawlers find you more easily. This shoots your results to the top of the page and brings in more of your prospective unaware audience. The content needs to be relevant and ownable. It must deliver on your brand purpose. And, it should be targeted—whether you are selling a service or a product, you should identify and target who your audiences are and sell directly to them.

Many businesses create content in the form of blogs and thought papers (like this one). These present content that's focused on the overlap of your expertise and your target's needs. Content can also include case studies, webinars, videos, newsletters, and podcasts. Unique content can be shared via email marketing and/or shared and boosted through your social media channels. It can serve as an attraction to guide and engage visitors through

your site and feed conversions. By gating content you create even more opportunities to make a connection with a customer. The ultimate goal is to have a visitor complete a form to access content.

When focused on promoting a specialized marketing campaign, it can be beneficial to create special content for that campaign. Perhaps a personalized content offering, a custom promotion, or a branded campaign message in the form of video or still imagery. Regardless, the content would have a structured approach to reach target audiences via pay per click ads, display ads, boosted social, and/or automated email marketing. Other media in the campaign can direct the customer back to the site, to a dedicated landing page, or to a retail store or other channel—no matter where it's accessed, there should be a strong call to action. Keep in mind some customers may be in the research phase, some in the evaluator phase, and some ready to make a decision. It's important to make sure you have content and calls to action for customers in any of these phases.

We'd be remiss if we didn't mention that, like anything else, there are a few downsides to digital marketing. Most notable, digital is a very competitive space. The low point of entry makes it accessible for all types of businesses, from small to large. Therefore, you may need to work that much harder to capture the attention of your audience.



Here are four important guidelines for success to get you started:

1. Spread the love (and don't abandon print). This sounds silly to say in an article about digital, but marketing works best when spread across a variety of channels, both digital and traditional. By pulling several levers at once, just a bit of the way, you can adjust the amount up or down on each lever depending on the success levels. But this also gives you the best chance to really saturate the space around your audience. It may not be the email blast that gets them to click—but when that eblast is in the back of their mind, and then they see a social ad followed by, perhaps, a memorable direct mail piece at home, it all starts to click. That's where brand awareness begins to take hold.

2. Keep your eye on the prize. The upside of digital marketing, and its advantage over traditional marketing, is the open tracking. Make sure to measure your metrics and find out what's working and what's not, then, very quickly, adjust or pivot. Don't be afraid to make a change when something is working or when it's not. Be flexible and agile, and keep your eye on what's winning.

3. Maintain the bigger picture. Keep a consolidated view of customer preferences and expectations across all channels—web, social media, mobile, and also direct mail, point of sale, etc. Use this information to create and anticipate consistent, coordinated brand experiences that will move customers along in the buying cycle. The deeper your insight into customer behavior and preferences, the more likely you are to correctly engage them in the process.

4. Be responsive. Stay on top of your efforts and respond to customer interactions. With the influx of social networking, the standard for customer service has increased as well. Prioritize customer feedback for stronger relationships and increased satisfaction.

At the end of the day, a strong marketing strategy, digital or otherwise, all comes back to the truth in your brand. Digital media is an ever-growing source of entertainment, news, retail, and social interaction. Customers are now exposed not just to what your company says about your brand, but what the media, family, friends, and others are saying as well. When a brand puts itself out there online, the presence and message has to be believable because it is quickly called out if it's not. Customers want brands they can trust, companies that know them, communications that are personalized and relevant, and offers tailored to their needs and preferences. Remember your audience, but be your authentic self. Always promote your brand truth. ■

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MEET BREE

With over 15 years' experience in advertising, brand strategy, brand building, and marketing in CLT/NYC/LA both on the client side and in large and small agencies—Bree Basham leads BOLTGROUP's creative team. Her varied experience includes work in B2B and B2C for industries ranging from manufacturing to consumer goods to fashion retail. Bree is active in the design industry and gives back to the community by mentoring, volunteering, and serving as President of AIGA Charlotte.