

11 CRITICAL COMPONENTS OF ANY SUCCESSFUL DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY

A collection of best practice recommendations designed to provide a foundation that can be adapted to fit any global organization's needs in the digital age.



01. Brand every experience consistently

Your brand in the digital world is a collection of logos, colors, images, multimedia, messages, tone and promises of value—all which set the standard for customer expectations and perceptions. Poor execution of your carefully cultivated brand paints your organization in a negative light and can confuse your audience.

Managing all these discrete components—across a growing number of touchpoints in a unified and cohesive manner—is crucial for successful digital customer engagement.

Often your company's digital presence is its primary representation of your brand to the marketplace. It may even be the hub of your entire digital presence.

When a prospect or customer visits your site, they judge your brand's credibility in a matter of seconds. Subconsciously, they ask themselves questions like: Is it familiar? Is it high-quality? What does it stand for? Do I trust it?

Given the high stakes, your digital strategy requires an approach for ensuring that visitors see the same logo, messaging and values regardless of the platform or screen they're using.

While some aspects of your brand may need to be flexibly tailored to specific markets or audiences, enforcing a calculated measure of unified consistency across all channels is key to growing and sustaining a powerful brand.

RECOMMENDATION:

Incorporate digital quality management into your digital marketing plan. Consider an automated governance tool that is capable of enabling centralized control of brand components across hundreds of digital touchpoints.

“Only 27% of marketers have a process in place to aggregate, organize and manage the visual assets being used across marketing (and even non-marketing) teams.”

CMO Council, August 2015



02. Build a central foundation for your digital experiences that will scale

As technology continues to evolve, so are the number of digital touchpoints companies need to manage in order to keep pace with their customers. Furthermore, these days, most businesses face serious consequences each time one of these touchpoints (like their website or a mobile app) is down or its performance is compromised

For global enterprise organizations, ensuring that your website is “up” should be non-negotiable. Of equal and related importance is creating a central hub from which to manage and launch *new* digital experiences.

To that end, your digital marketing plan should include the utilization of a highly-available web operations system that is scalable. Scalability ensures you can both deploy new digital experiences in an agile manner while handling planned or unforeseen influxes of traffic.

Constructing and supporting an infrastructure with the appropriate performance, fail-safes and disaster recovery in place requires resources, which is why the reliability of your digital infrastructure can no longer solely be the worry of your IT organization.

Marketers need to co-own the issue and lobby for budget, because their brands — now more than ever — are tied up in the promises and credibility conveyed by their digital footprint.

RECOMMENDATION:

Work with IT to incorporate technology requirements into your marketing plan, specifically the need for a platform that can scale to meet the growing needs of your organization’s sales and marketing initiatives.



03. Keep content fresh

The success of a website is determined by how effectively the content engages its visitors.

Given the role of content in today's customer journey, your digital marketing plan should address how to captivate users with useful content every time they visit your site. If your content is dated, or worse irrelevant, they are less likely to stick around or return in the future.

“60% of marketers create at least one piece of content each day.”

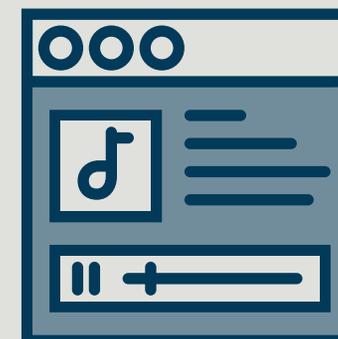
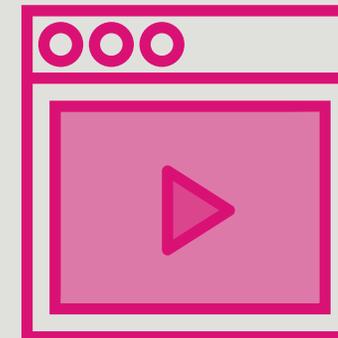
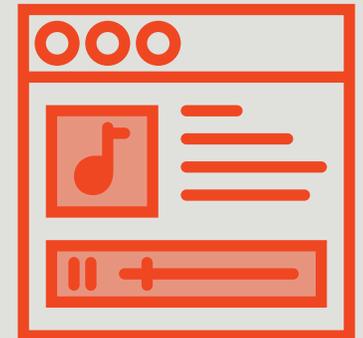
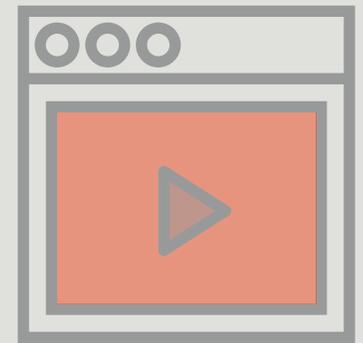
- eMarketer, April 2013

Ultimately, addressing that challenge comes down to ensuring that visitors have access to fresh content that's relevant to the objective of their visit. Keeping content fresh can be a formidable task for global digital marketing teams who often have hundreds of campaigns and assets to manage across various devices for audiences around the globe.

A tactic some leading digital marketers have adopted is to create content “schedules” within their WCM platform that use workflows and “branching” of pages or page templates to manage their content lifecycle. Content expires based on time or user engagement metrics and new content is cycled in. Digital marketers—especially those at large global corporations—need flexible platforms and services that enable them to easily create, publish and manage digital content to all touchpoints to support sophisticated and episodic content delivery across their digital properties.

RECOMMENDATION:

A successful digital marketing plan must be supported with tools that enable content collaboration, reviewing capabilities, and the ability to publish content with agility.



04. “Localize” content for global audiences

Language translation alone is not enough to optimize a user’s experience when interacting with a global brand. Simply having a translated website does not mean the site has been “localized.”

Localization refers to the process of adapting all the content of a website—not just the language—to the needs of a targeted locale (defined as the combination of geography, language and most importantly, culture). That means the images, tone and style must all be factored in when creating content to support a localization strategy.

Consider platforms and tools that enable you to not just localize content by page or URL, but also to geo-locate users and localize specific elements within site pages. Platforms such as these enable your enterprise to leverage and re-use data-models and templates across the global organization, while simultaneously optimizing digital experiences for local markets.

Addressing localization head-on requires a blend of technology, process, and cultural expertise. The secret to success here is balance: let global HQ control top-level branding elements while empowering local marketing teams to publish specific content elements that convey messaging in appropriate local context.

RECOMMENDATION:

Your global marketing strategy should include specifics on how you’ll tailor the graphics, products, messaging, and offers across all digital touchpoints so that they are relevant for each locale.

“72% of consumers would be more likely to buy a product using information in their own language. 56% of the consumers in the study said the ability to obtain information in their own language is even more important than price.”

Harvard Business Review, August 2012



05. Get to know your audience

Ultimately, the ability to dynamically deliver personalized online experiences depends on what is known about a visitor at the time of interaction. A marketer must be able to aggregate data and then leverage it during each digital interaction, progressively building a richer visitor profile so that content can be optimized to drive conversions. With the right tools, a marketer will have many ways to build a useful profile for each visitor:

VISITOR DATA EXAMPLES

Ambient Data	Behavioral Data	User-Provided Data	3rd Party Data
Location, device, referring source, keyword search, campaign	Time spent on site, pages viewed, click conversions	Profile/registration, surveys, polls, download requests	Data from 3rd party solutions such as company, industry, or audience segment

- **Ambient Data** is available behind the scenes from a variety of sources such as web server logs and analytics tracking software.
- **Behavioral Data** is information that can be tracked, such as the behavior of visitors as they interact with your online content. From this type of data, marketers can infer which topics are of highest interest to a visitor.
- **User-Provided Data** is collected from visitors who provide it voluntarily or upon request.
- **3rd-Party Data** is typically purchased from organizations that offer the service of providing user information, such as Demandbase, Oracle BlueKai or RocketFuel x+1.

The aggregate of this data—and the more the better—can be used to accomplish personalized and localized delivery of targeted digital experiences to segments, as well as for contextualizing your analytics insights.

RECOMMENDATION:

Your digital marketing strategy should include leveraging specialized tools and sources to gain insights about your prospects and act on them. Look for a digital experience management solution that enables you to personalize content from within the platform.



06. Personalize content for each and every visit

When it comes to communicating with customers and prospects, one size does not fit all. Personalizing content on a persona-by-persona basis can be difficult to achieve, yet the benefits are well worth the effort.

Companies that offer personalized digital experiences with the right messaging achieve higher conversion rates than those who generalize their content. They also experience lower abandonment rates because the products, services and offers being displayed are aligned with the visitor's intent.

Personalization improves the overall user experience, which naturally results in improved brand perception. The challenge is how to deliver content that has a high probability of being relevant to the user. A solution that empowers marketers to create, test and tweak messaging as more is learned about what resonates most for each persona, is essential for effective user targeting.

"Personalized CTAs resulted in a 42% higher conversion rate than generic CTAs."

HubSpot, August 2013

"74% of online customers get frustrated with brands that deliver content that appears to have nothing to do with their interests."

Janrain, July 2013

RECOMMENDATION:

Segment audiences into target personas and develop unique messaging and online experiences for each persona.



07. Test, analyze & repeat for iterative improvement

If you want to improve your digital experiences to maximize conversions you have to remove the guesswork as to what content resonates with your visitors. With the right tools in place, digital marketers can easily run A/B or multivariate tests to evaluate the effectiveness of content and context—including everything from messaging, images, content placement and more.

For deeper insights, consider using data-driven targeted tests. For example, while a non-targeted test would compare how visitors respond to two different messages, a targeted test would measure how two different segments respond to the same message.

RECOMMENDATION:

A successful digital marketing plan should define key metrics, as well as identify (and budget for) tools to test and iterate in order to improve performance.



08. Make your content easy to discover

You could be developing the world's best content for your visitors. Yet if nobody can find it, it's an exercise in futility. Do not assume that visitors will find the content they want without a clear path.

Marketers and business technologists should constantly be thinking about the pathways to content just as much as the content itself. There are two pathways to your content that need to be considered:

- Users who are "**off-the-site**" need to be driven to your site in order to access content.
- Users who are "**on-the-site**" and may be looking for specific content but need to be directed.

Off-the-site: Traditional inbound channels that drive traffic to "off-the-site" content include PR, directory listings, advertising, syndication, social media, etc.

Often search engines stand out as the most prevalent (and cost-effective) sources that drive people to content, which underscores the importance of SEO.

Successful SEO depends on:

- Improving the quality of site structure, keywords, messaging and content
- Increasing inlinks to your site from other relevant, high-quality external websites

On-the-site: Once visitors are on your site, you still have to give them intuitive ways to find information that fulfills their needs.

Architecture and navigation should be laid out in a logical manner that flows.

Tried-and-true UI paradigms like utilizing breadcrumbs and sitemaps are still effective (and benefit SEO as well). However, marketers should also provide a robust multifaceted search capability, and tools that automatically surface related or personalized content.

RECOMMENDATION:

A comprehensive digital marketing strategy should include tactics for ensuring users discover and interact with your content both on-the-site and off-the-site.

"66% of best-in-class companies involve considerations for search/SEO in their content creation process from the beginning."

Contently, July 2015



09. Optimize for mobile

Mobile is now the primary channel for most digital interactions worldwide. It is no longer a buzzword. It's a critical digital marketing and commerce channel.

Smartphone and tablet adoption will only evolve and experience greater rates of adoption from here. Meaning digital marketers can no longer afford to relegate mobile strategy to the periphery of their planning.

All users are now demanding the same standards of intuitiveness and performance from mobile websites that they've come to expect from desktop experiences. Search engines place greater emphasis on sites that are optimized for mobile devices. Accommodating different devices, screen sizes, and operating systems will be an ongoing challenge. More than ever before, digital marketers need the tools to easily deliver on the promise of:

- Responsive design
- Mobile-optimized content
- Fast (high-performance) mobile websites that deliver app-like functionality
- Personalization based on GPS location

RECOMMENDATION:

Digital marketers should ask themselves with every strategic initiative, "How is this going to work on mobile?" and include this consideration in every facet of their digital strategy development.

"85% of mobile users expect pages to load as fast as or faster than they load on the desktop."

Radware, January 2014



10. Leverage social channels in a calculated way

Social media provides digital marketers with valuable and unique opportunities to build awareness, authenticity, and brand identity. Perhaps even more promising is their growing ability to target users, generate inbound leads and provide true one-on-one engagement with prospects and customers.

While these present revolutionary possibilities for marketers, they have resulted in two growing challenges:

- Many marketers are missing the mark on using social media to its advantage, because they are neglecting to realize that like every other vehicle, social media is a tactical tool to support specific strategic objectives. Meaning, building or managing a social profile in itself is not a strategy, but a tactic. For example, “building brand recognition with a desired target audience to win more business” is a strategy. While “syndicating useful content to that audience market through Twitter” is a tactic that helps achieve the strategy. If a marketing team cannot clearly articulate how a platform helps their strategy, they are just doing busy work.
- With a multitude of social media platforms in use and on the horizon, large global brands are losing control of their corporate voice and brand. There is an abundance of horror stories about corporate social media programs run amok when a brand is glaringly misrepresented in a one-off message on an unchecked channel. It’s a battle that will only get tougher to manage without centralized control over multiple accounts and platforms across geographies.

RECOMMENDATION:

Within the context of your digital marketing strategy, make sure you have a true social media strategy, and that your image is consistent with your brand’s overarching values.



11. Pave the way for integrations and interoperability

Digital marketers live in a world of constant innovation. To address a rapidly changing market, they must onboard new technologies and platforms constantly. Ideally, marketing professionals should be able to choose best-of-breed tools in order to achieve their metrics and objectives. However, what's "best" of breed can shift as digital marketing programs evolve and new tools emerge.

Some web content management platforms operate in a "walled garden", making marketers beholden to only those functionalities that exist today in that specific platform. This structure creates roadblocks to future innovations by limiting the ability to use new 3rd party platforms and tools, and preventing agencies or strategic partners from executing fresh approaches.

Today's leading digital marketers need to build their own marketing technology stacks, picking platforms and tools that map to their unique requirements, key performance indicators and goals.

RECOMMENDATION:

Create a digital marketing strategy that hinges on selecting open-architecture platforms designed to integrate and interoperate with today and tomorrow's tools.





★ crownpeak

crownpeak.com

1-800-887-1944

Founded in January 2001, Crownpeak was the first company to offer web content management through a SaaS solution. Today, leading brands trust Crownpeak's cloud-first Digital Experience Management (DXM) platform to quickly and easily create, deploy and optimize customer experiences across digital touchpoints at scale. Crownpeak provides a complete solution for DXM featuring content management, personalization, search and hosting, in addition to fully integrated Digital Quality Management (DQM) to ensure brand integrity and meet compliance requirements. More than 180 customers including Unilever, BNY Mellon, Thomson Reuters, Eli Lilly, and Aflac rely on Crownpeak to deliver engaging experiences that delight customers, promote loyalty and deliver results.

