

The

7

steps

**you can't afford to miss when
creating your digital strategy**



Introduction

Many businesses and marketers struggle to conjure up and execute effective digital strategies that will streamline marketing efforts while increasing overall ROI. If you're a marketer you should be asking yourself: What is my marketing strategy and how effective is it?

Understanding what a digital strategy is and how an effective one can enhance your business long term is vital for any sustainable marketing plan. This whitepaper will break down your digital marketing strategy into four parts:

- **Defining Your Digital Marketing Strategy**
- **The Marketing Stack**
- **Developing a Strategy**
- **Execute your Strategy**

Defining your Digital Marketing Strategy 4

The Marketing Stack: Organizing Your Strategy..... 5

Developing Your Digital Strategy 7

Executing the Strategy 11

Conclusion..... 16

About Snaptech Marketing 17





Defining your Digital Marketing Strategy

In accordance with Google, a strategy is “a plan of action that is designed to achieve an overall goal.”

In terms of digital marketing, your strategy should be defined as a course of action that uses metrics to link marketing factors while applying recurring tactics. A good strategy is usually defined by 10 properties as outlined here:



1. A **digital strategy is not a goal**, but rather the method in which you can achieve your goal.
2. A **strategy involves the use of recurring tactics** – things you do repeatedly to achieve your goal.
3. A digital marketing strategy affects the core of a business by having an **extensive impact on your primary business goals**.
4. A digital strategy **has specific goals** and should aim for a measurable end.
5. A **digital marketing strategy is holistic**. It should be synonymous and consistent throughout an organization, regardless of size and incorporated into a singular vision. Don't limit your possibilities at the first step, as it's just a starting point.
6. A good digital marketing strategy—regardless of any new implementations—must **remain consistent** and unaffected by surrounding change.
7. A strategy involves a **multiple channel approach**. Diversifying your digital strategy into multiple segments is the best overall plan.
8. A strategy can connect aspects to goals through the use of metrics; therefore, allowing you to link your business goals with successful tactics to **measure your overall effectiveness**.
9. A good digital strategy acknowledges that **data alone can't do much**. It plans for Data Storytellers that will sift through the data (likely tons of it), blend out the 'noise' and translate them into actionable items – directly impacting your primary business goals.
10. A good digital strategy will **plan for continuous improvement** in an effort to seek incremental improvement over time.



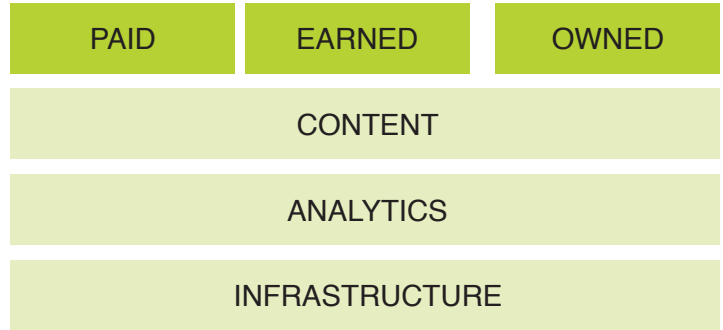


The Marketing Stack: Organizing Your Strategy

The marketing stack is the funnel through which a user is guided from the point of interest to the point of conversion.

The stack consists of several layers, each serving a particular function that influences every other medium. If one channel is affected, your stack will be affected.

To maximize your digital strategy you need to understand the relationship between each medium and how to organize them for maximum user engagement and ROI.



Percolation

In the marketing stack, everything “percolates” upwards. This means that your infrastructure influences everything throughout the stack, meaning, if your infrastructure is in a poor state, it will adversely affect the categories further up the stack. **For customers, however, the percolation is reversed.** The lower down the stack a customer goes, the more important the lower categories become.

The stack percolation starts with 3 categories that set the foundation for your marketing strategy. These elements are broken down into 3 categories:

- Infrastructure
- Analytics
- Content

Infrastructure

Infrastructure is the technology that powers your site and your online presence, driving everything from automation to social media.

If your site doesn't run efficiently, is slow, or riddled with errors, everything else will suffer as a result.

Analytics

Analytics helps you measure everything you do. Analytics platforms don't just report your web traffic, they use various tools to help run multiple tests to tell you what is and isn't working. Without analytics, you cannot properly assess whether your infrastructure is working optimally.

This also includes Data Storytellers that will sift through mountains of data, blend out all the data 'noise,' as well as, identifying “Golden Nuggets” and insights that are relevant to you. They are also able to translate these relevant insights into actionable items – usually in the form of a “Story”—that is easy to comprehend by every decision maker, hence their name.

Content

Content is your entire mode of communication. Essentially, everything you say online is your content. Whether it is images, text, video, audio, blog posts or product descriptions, these all fall under the content spectrum. In marketing, content is king; without it, you can't cultivate an efficient marketing strategy.

All 3 of these elements are tied together by analytics. Ignoring the data leaves you guessing and more prone to making your strategy inefficient. To maximize your content and infrastructure, you need to connect the dots using your analytics to measure results and identify weaknesses.



The Channels

Further up the stack you find the channels, which are the categories a user first sees when exploring your brand. When talking about channels, the levels run deeper than just 'PPC' or 'organic search.' The 3 basic marketing channels are broken down as such:

- ▶ Paid
- ▶ Earned
- ▶ Owned

Paid Channel

This is the channel where you spend money to acquire customer attention through modes like paid advertising, i.e. "pay-per -click" (PPC), digital advertising, sponsored posts, etc.

Earned Channel

On the earned channel, you don't buy attention; you earn it by 'being valuable' to your audience. Examples of these channels are organic traffic (SEO) and social media.

Owned Channel

The owned channel is where you control the media that gets customer attention – meaning you own this content. This includes content like blog posts, product descriptions and special offers.

Your digital strategy has to involve at least one of these channels; however, in order to maximize your strategy's potential, it is best to utilize every channel for these 3 reasons:

- 1 Customers use different channels at different stages throughout their path to purchase. Earned can create the initial interest > paid may drive user purchase intent > owned can close the conversion and validate.
- 2 Should one channel render itself ineffective, having all 3 channels at your disposal means you'll still have to effective channels to continue the process.
- 3 An effective marketer doesn't ignore any channel.

“In marketing, diversity = strength”



Developing Your Digital Strategy

Once you have organized and prepped for your digital strategy, the time has come to actually create it.

Please keep in mind, however, that there are “many different ways to skin a cat”. No two organizations are exactly the same and you may want to deviate from the below where appropriate. This road map to create your digital strategy has worked well for many of our clients.

At this stage is where all of your metrics come into play as far as influencing your decisions regarding the creation of your strategy. Creating a digital strategy involves listing the components your strategy has, setting strategic goals and seeing what works to achieve those goals.

A high-level overview of the digital strategy development process

List What You Have Got

Take stock of everything in your marketing strategy. This initial step sets the tone for what you are going to accomplish the rest of the way.

1 Check Infrastructure

When checking your infrastructure, know your strengths and limitations. Follow this checklist and add to it where applicable:

- Are you using shared hosting?
- What are your page load times? Are they fast or slow?
- Does your site have any 404 errors?
- Are you conducting A/B testing?
- Do you have the right team to run it all?
- Are you on a Content Distribution Network (CDN)?
- Does your site use PHP programming language?
- How do generated leads flow into your CRM?

2 Evaluate Analytics

It is important to know what you can measure. Before you delve deeper into metrics and micro-conversions, you should first determine what data you want to measure and what tools you will use to acquire this data. You will want to measure all possible conversions, so taking inventory of your analytics will help you determine your measurement goals. Accurate and effective measurement is critical for digital success so it is important to evaluate your analytics thoroughly.

When assessing your analytics platform, keep the following concepts in mind:

- Is your analytics platform collecting all of the available data?
- Does your analytics setup utilize the latest tools for data collection?
- Is your data being confounded or skewed by unwanted data sources?
- Is your data properly integrated with additional third-party platforms?
- Is your analytics platform tracking user actions that indicate purchase intent?
- Is your data providing you clear insights to be used for actionable business decisions?
- Is your data able to tell you the true story?



3 Conduct Content Inventory

- List of all content on site – images to pages
- Social media shares
- Page views
- Time on page
- Bounce Rate
- Value per page view
- Reading grade level of each page
- Page load time
- Engagement Levels
- Top phrases on each page
- Conversions by page

4 Evaluate Channels

Evaluate the 3 channels and determine where improvements can be made. List all tactics & vehicles per channel, dollars invested in each and the KPI's for each (e.g.: ROI, ROAS, etc.):

- Paid
- Earned
- Owned

5 Set Benchmarks based on Your Company's Past Performance

Identify and graph metrics of your company's past performance. Areas to look at usually include:

- Revenue per month
- Number of sales per month
- Number of marketing qualified leads / channel / month
- Conversion rate / month
- Etc.

6 Define Your Buyer Persona

Accurately defining your audience and buyer persona is critical. Certain types of customers are more likely to buy than others. If you can identify your ideal audience you can target your perfect audience online at a much higher ROI.

Conduct research by utilizing data—often found in your Google Analytics—and combine this with the data in your CRM. Don't shy away to obtain feedback from Salesforce; also, you may want to interview existing clients.

You can only effectively reach your target audience when you understand both their demographics and psychographics. The combination of both sets of data starts to form your buyer persona – a detailed picture of the people you work with now and would like to work with in the future. Let's create a very basic buyer persona based on what we know about the ideal customer for a nutritional counselor.

DEMOGRAPHIC RESEARCH:

Demographics explain "who" your buyer is.

- Age
- Gender
- Geography
- Job Title(s)
- Marital Status
- Income Level

PSYCHOGRAPHIC RESEARCH:

Psychographics explain "why" they buy.

- Activity, interest, opinion (AIOs)
- Attitudes
- Values
- Behavior

TIP:

Think about sentences describing your audience that start with:

- Activity, interest, opinion (AIOs)
- Attitudes
- Values
- Behavior

CREATE YOUR BUYER PERSONA(S):

Take the information you have gathered from your research and interviews and come up with a profile for each group. Give each of your personas a name and an image. If your business is a pet supply store, for instance, your buyer personas might include Sally the dog owner, for female dog owners that value organic and natural dog foods.

Sally the Dog Owner

“Ever since I was a kid I’ve had a cat or a dog in the house and don’t think I could live without my pet. As I’ve become more aware of the nasty ingredients in pet food, I’ve started to shop more carefully for other pet products as well as learn what I can do to make my home safer for my pet.”



DEMOGRAPHICS	IDENTIFIERS
<p>Gender: Female</p> <p>Age Range: 25 -60</p> <p>Income: 50,000 - \$120,000</p> <p>Urbanicity: Suburban & Urban</p> <p>Education: Mix of college and undergrad</p> <p>Race: White, Black, Asian, Hispanic, Mix</p>	<p>Buzzwords: Pet friendly, organic, natural, anti-biotics free.</p> <p>Mannerism: I am positive, I love to live life and be inspired. I have an appreciation and respect for animals Mix of college and</p>

Incorporating the needs of your different target audiences is critical.

Some companies have placed images of their buyer personas throughout offices and on the walls of conference rooms to reinforce these amongst their team.

7 Analyze Opportunities

Creating a good marketing strategy requires finding where there are competitive opportunities. This means understanding your business’ strengths and your competitors’ weaknesses and how you can exploit them. You may want to do a SWOT analysis for this.

Also, you can do this by using various tools for any of your mediums (SEO, PPC, Social); by combining them, you can see when and where your marketing is able to shine and grow. The more extensive you make this process the easier it becomes to define new opportunities.

Set Strategic Goals

Once you understand what factors are working, you can strategically set your goals—either ambitious or conservative—to determine what is best for your business.

See What Works: Determine Factors

Take stock from your inventory and find out which factors are impacting your business goals. Analyze the parts of your marketing stack and behaviour models to measure which factors will be most successful. If you can't measure thoroughly, and properly, your metrics will be largely ineffective. Determine your metrics and how those metrics relate to conversions.

DETERMINE METRICS

Use your metrics to track factors, but make sure they are the right metrics. You want to be able to accurately determine which factors are beneficial to your marketing goals. Metrics include various elements like:

- Cost / acquisition
- Cost / conversion
- Conversion Rates
- Phone calls
- Webform submissions
- Page views
- Unique Visitors
- Bounce Rates
- Page Value
- E-mail List Signups
- Social Shares
- Etc.

A metric can be anything that helps you measure progress towards your strategic goal.



Executing the Strategy

This is where the fun begins, and where you get tactical. Actually creating your marketing strategy involves implementing each part of the marketing stack to work in cohesion with one another. The marketing stack should act as roadmap, guiding every element of your strategy. You create content to tell your story and use data to analyze its effectiveness.

Knowing what tactics you want to employ and having the resources to do it is an extremely important part of creating your digital strategy. You might follow all of the necessary steps and have your marketing strategy running efficiently, but without data and storytelling, your strategy won't be very effective. Plan accordingly, using these two concepts, in order to see greater results from your strategy.

THE BIG IDEA

By this point, you hopefully have conjured up “The Big Idea” – the central theme around which you are devising your marketing strategy. None of these are actual strategy, but they are sections that you can build your plan around.

These could be anything like:

- **New brand representation**
- **Using social media to build content attention**
- **Creating content strategies and campaigns**
- **A whole new website section**

THE TACTICS

Now we can finally get tactical and every tactic is set within the parameters of the marketing stack. We show you how we move “up” the marketing stack.

INFRASTRUCTURE

This can be the trickiest area as it impacts every other layer of the stack. Most of our minimum thresholds depend on infrastructure. Create an action plan for solving problems identified during your “Infrastructure Check”.

ANALYTICS

In order to improve your measurement capabilities, refer to problems identified during your “Analytics Evaluation” and have them fixed as soon as possible. Also, this is the time to get expert advice on how to bring your data collection to the next level.

Think about solutions other than Google Analytics. You may want to utilize technologies like Heat Maps, Call Tracking, Lead Scoring, Content Scoring Software, Competitive Intelligence Tools, Experimentation Tools, Social Analytics, etc. The list can go on and on. The goal is not to create mountains of irrelevant data, but rather to measure what really matters most to your business and directly impacts your strategic goals and performance.

Improving your analytics will allow you to collect more relevant data and enhance your levels of measurement.

Also, now is the time to take action and find a Data Storyteller. Without one, your only result will be the accumulation of lots of data. To blend out all the “data noise”, find “Golden Nuggets,” and receive “relevant actionable insights” is extremely difficult and requires experts.

CONTENT

Develop a content strategy that is relevant and tailored for your audience and buyer personas. In doing so, you will ensure higher engagement levels and be able to attract more traffic.

Remember: Content is King – so produce great content for your audience.

CHANNELS:

Use the data collected & assessed before to determine which channel(s) you like to prioritize and focus on. Further detailed analysis on each of them is highly recommended!

▶ PAID

- Paid Search

- ▶ Based on your geographic target market, assess which search engine your ideal target audience is actually using.
 - ▶ Google? Bing? Yahoo? Baidu? Yandex? Etc.
- ▶ Develop your Paid Search Strategy accordingly. You may need the help and input from a Paid Search Specialist for this.

- Digital Advertising

- ▶ Try to build a “relevant” digital advertising campaign strategy by applying this “simple” formula:

The Right Ad + to the Right person + in the Right Place + at the Right Time = Relevant Advertising

You may want to further read up on this topic in greater detail on our blog:
<http://www.snaptech.com/snapblog/the-relevant-purchase-path.asp>

- ▶ Assess Digital Advertising tactics like:
 - ▶ Remarketing & Retargeting
 - ▶ Contextual Targeting
 - ▶ In Market Segments
 - ▶ Affinity Segments
 - ▶ Email Address Targeting
 - ▶ Keyword & Topic Targeting

And yes, for these initiatives you may need the help of an industry expert. This will help you to be hyper-targeted and avoid non-performing campaigns and costly ad spend.

- Paid Social Advertising

- First, assess which Social Media Channels your ideal target audience can be found. We recommend you focus on just one or two Social platforms, instead of spreading your efforts too thin by trying to play everywhere.
 - ▶ Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Tumblr, Pinterest, Etc.
- Develop your Social Advertising Strategy accordingly. Targeting is key here! You may need the help and input from a Paid Search Specialist for this.

The vendors offering digital advertising (like Google, Facebook, etc.) made it incredible easy for everyone to run digital advertising campaigns. Simply open an account, enter your credit card info and off you go.

However, to get the most ROI out of the paid channel, you need to be an expert in this ever-changing field. Keeping up with these changes and evolving targeting options is highly-challenging, even for full-time experts. There is a high likelihood that you are not an expert if you have made it this far in reading this whitepaper.

If ROI and results are important to you, we highly recommend and encourage you to consult with experts on assessing which paid tactic is right for you and have them assist you with a strategy and execution for each.

▶ EARNED

- SEO Tactics

- Based on your geographic target market, assess which search engine your ideal audience is actually using.
- Develop your organic search strategy accordingly. You may need the help from a Search Engine Optimization or Marketing Specialist for this.
- Identify keywords, phrases and content that align with how users are searching the web for topics related to your business. These can be used to improve your organic visibility.
- Optimize your website landing pages to accurately communicate value to search engines.

- Social Media Marketing

- First assess which platform(s) is best for your brand in terms of audience engagement.
 - ▶ Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Tumblr, Pinterest
- Create content that engages your followers.
- Tell your brand story through various forms of media to create a community and build a follower base.
- Social media should help to drive users to other areas on your website, like your blog.
- Content is king; however, quality trumps quantity – posting the right amount with the best content will enhance your overall success.
- Use social media analytics platforms to help you track and measure what audience engagement levels are with your brand.

You may also need the help of an expert on this as well. While it may not directly influence conversions, social media is just as important for your branding and marketing efforts, and can be a very effective advertising platform if done correctly.

- Public Relations

- Your PR is your communications execution of your digital strategy. This is where you are trying to put your best foot forward and building trusting relationships with your audience.
- Create a communications plan that will execute your marketing strategy.
- Develop communication with your audience and stakeholders that reflects positively on your brand.
- Assess PR tactics like:
 - Media Relations
 - ▶ Lists, contacts, publications etc.
 - Crisis Communications
 - ▶ Brand damaging factors, prevention practices
 - Sponsorship
 - Word of Mouth
 - Campaigns
 - Social Media

To get the most ROI out of the earned channel, you need to be an expert in this constantly changing field. Keeping up with these changes is highly-challenging, even for full-time experts. There is a high likelihood that you are not an expert if you have made it this far in reading this whitepaper.

If ROI and results are important to you, we highly recommend and encourage you to consult with experts on assessing which paid tactic is right for you and have them assist you with a strategy and execution for each.

▶ OWNED

- User Generated Content - like your blog

- Consistently update your blog
- Create “evergreen content” – content that is sustainable and can be updated periodically without losing value.
- Provide thought leadership through lists, how-to articles and reviews on various marketing industry related topics
- Use visuals like images and video to enhance your posts’ visibility, readability and engagement potential

- Reviews

- Write reviews of other products and services
- Post client testimonials on your website; cross-promote by writing testimonials on client websites

- E-Mail Marketing

- Most effective inbound marketing strategy
- Target specific audiences with thought-provoking content
- Segment audience to target users who are most likely to convert on your website

- Mobile Optimization

- Optimize your landing pages to fit every screen (phone, tablet, and desktop)
- Mobile has overtaken desktop as the primary mode for transferring information to users
- Failing to optimize for mobile can have consequences resulting in loss of potential leads and demoted search rankings
- Younger demographics are constantly on mobile, this is a demographic that can be reached through optimization

To maximize your ROI out of the owned channel, you need to be well-versed in understanding the frequent changes and trends within this field. Keeping up with these changes is highly challenging, even for full-time experts. There is a high likelihood that you are not an expert if you made it this far in reading this whitepaper.

If ROI and results are important to your business, then we highly recommend and encourage you to consult with experts to assess which owned tactic is the right one for you. They can help assist you with a strategy and execution for each.

- Look for Digital Chaos Factors

What are digital chaos factors? These are online things that influence change to your strategy falling under part of your planning process.

Great digital marketing strategies are able to adapt to any unforeseen changes that occur. By calling out these factors, everyone is made aware of any unexpected changes that need to be made.

You don't need to prepare for every specific factor, just be aware of them and be ready to take the necessary steps should any of them occur.

Digital Chaos Factors may include:

- Unexpected media coverage (good or bad)
- Reputation management
- A new social media site
- Actions of your competitor(s) that may change your channel priorities
- Etc.

► RESOURCES REQUIRED

- Hard Costs

Here is where you need to outline the tactics that require dedicated budgets. Paying for advertising or hiring new employees are examples of hard cost.

- Soft Costs

Soft costs don't translate to money, but are just as important because they factor in time and resources. How long your team spends on a particular project would fall under the "soft cost" umbrella.

How you approach documenting these costs is up to you, just as long as you do indeed document them. By doing this, you can weigh your costs and prioritize what areas you can and should dedicate your spending – which can be critical in developing a cost-effective strategy.



Conclusion

Creating a great strategy doesn't happen overnight. While many clients will question the validity of a full marketing strategy, it is, indeed, very necessary. It wasn't that long ago that social media was considered an afterthought.

Today we have seen it rise to the forefront as a competitive and legitimate marketing channel – the same can be said for a comprehensive digital marketing strategy. Fully developing your strategy is a key piece to ensuring you will maximize the value - of your marketing for your business goals.

Every business, in the end, has a singular focus – profit. They want to make the most money for the least amount of expense, and this is where a thorough digital marketing strategy becomes so important. If you can understand your audience, implement the right tactics, and measure your results effectively, you will see a significant boost to your return on investment.





About Snaptech Marketing

Snaptech Marketing can help you develop, strategize and implement your digital marketing strategy using effective and proven data-driven techniques.

Agencies are full of creative people, yet most of them lack the skills and approaches that we possess. We block out the “data noise” and really emphasize metrics – which have high value that directly relates to conversions instead of just impression and clicks.

If you want to stop all the guesswork and begin maximizing your digital ROI give us a call or visit our website to learn more.

