The 4 Phases of Digital Marketing

The framework behind the 26-Week Digital Marketing Plan

David Bain

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Accompanying video

This e-book should be read alongside watching the accompanying *4 Phases of Digital Marketing* video, which is available to view free-of-charge here:
http://www.26weekplan.com/4phases

The *4 Phases of Digital Marketing* is the framework behind the *26-Week Digital Marketing Plan*. Get access to all of the *26-Week Digital Marketing Plan* Inner Circle training videos here:
http://www.26weekplan.com/join

About the author / background

David Bain

After graduating with an MBA, and several years providing SEO services for various clients, David Bain taught his first digital marketing class in April 2007 – he called this training session the "*13 Pillars of Internet Marketing*".

After completing this seminar David received a great deal of positive feedback. However, one attendee did mention that he would have preferred to leave the training with a step-by-step action plan. Within 6 months the *26-Week Internet Marketing Plan* was born – now called the *26-Week Digital Marketing Plan*.

The *26-Week Digital Marketing Plan* started out as a day-long training seminar, but now includes so much information it's turned into a set of Kindle e-books, audiobooks and 26 hours' worth of members-only training videos in the Inner Circle area. Find out more at www.26weekplan.com.

Introduction

So what kind of background are you likely to have if you are reading this book? Perhaps you'd consider yourself as a senior in the digital industry? Maybe you're a newbie just starting out?

I would imagine that the majority of you are somewhere in-between.

No matter what stage you consider yourself to be, I believe you will benefit from reading this book and watching the associated 4-Phases video.

I think that it's fair to call me a digital marketing professional, but in reality nobody really knows absolutely everything about everything about digital marketing. That's why even senior digital managers will probably profit from reading this book. I know that I continue to learn as each day goes by.

It is easy to think that you know everything that you need to know about digital marketing, but then you come across a completely new strategy that you knew nothing about before.

In this book I am going to talk about the 'four phases of digital marketing'.

These phases are the core framework behind the *26-Week Digital Marketing Plan* and these 4-phases should provide you with a strong starting point from which to start implementing a successful digital marketing campaign.

My Background

Firstly, I would like to share some of my background with you, so you can see how I gained my experience and knowledge. I started my first online business in the year 2000, with an internet restaurant guide where people were also able to make reservations online. However, the concept was slightly premature and my business colleague and I couldn't really agree on the business strategy, so cutting a long story short it wasn't a huge success.

Although it wasn't successful this is where I got my grounding in digital marketing. I then learned how to design my own websites, how it all fitted together – how to drive traffic and how to make money from that traffic. By 2004 and I was earning around £500 a week from my websites (approximately $1,000 USD at the time).

In 2005-2006, I started to attend networking events where people would ask me how I was making my money and how they could do the same. During this time I began providing SEO services for a variety of local clients.

However, around 2007, I started to get frustrated with all the so-called *sharks* in the SEO world. For example, there were companies saying things like "pay us $99 and we will build 100,000 links to your website and get you ranked top of Google overnight!"

These crafty characters were preying on well meaning people who just wanted to make their website successful, but who didn't know that this would be detrimental to their site over the long term.

What I felt passionately was that people in business needed educating on digital marketing (not necessarily to carry out all the work themselves, but at least to understand what needed to be done, and the right ways to do it). That way, if they wanted to employ an agency, they could manage the agency much more effectively. So, in 2007 I started conducting various seminars to help businesses and other people to understand the elements and processes behind a successful digital marketing strategy.

In 2008, I launched a DVD series with a workbooks based upon one of those seminars, geared towards home study. Some of the reviews of this course from top bloggers at the time were really great.

In 2010 I re-launched version 2.0 of the 26-Week Plan, as everything in the online marketing world can change so quickly.

Now fast-forward another few years and I've recently launched version 3.0 – the most comprehensive, up-to-date version of the *26-Week Digital Marketing Plan* I've ever released.

Here's what a couple of digital marketing leaders think of the plan…

Testimonials

"The program is a fantastic down-to-earth study course that I believe is ideal for small business managers to get a hold of if they need to learn the entire framework of successful digital marketing. I was very glad to see sections on both blogging and online magazine publishing in the materials, along with pay per click, press releases, Kindle e-books, social media marketing, podcasting, video marketing, email marketing, conversion testing, keyword research and much more – it's darn comprehensive, that is for sure!
David is a very up to date digital marketer…"

Yaro Starak, Entrepreneurs-Journey.com

"I've had a look at the digital marketing plan and the training looks fantastic. This is the type of content that is relevant to both online businesses and offline businesses. David is a very sharp marketer."

Ezra Firestone, SmartMarketer.com

Phase #1: Software & Structure

Phase #1 Software & Structure

Start the *4-Phases of Digital Marketing* video at **8 minutes and 14 seconds** to watch the Phase #1 section of the seminar.

Watch the video here: **http://www.26weekplan.com/4phases**
(If you can, watch this video while reading this chapter.)

Selecting your Host and CMS; and checking your site speed

It is very important that you start off with a fast, reliable website host and a good CMS (Content Management System). Unless you do this you'll be delivering a poor experience for your website visitors and this will also impact your organic search engine rankings.

I have case studies inside the *26-Week Digital Marketing Plan* Inner Circle which show the web page load speed of various websites. Generally, if your web pages load in more than 5 seconds (first instance) then you have site speed issues. However, very fast sites can load in under a second. Check your web page loading speed for free at http://www.webpagetest.org.

When selecting a site host there are 3 main options. Either a shared server (cheap, but site speed in unpredictable dues to other sites sharing the same server as you), a dedicated host (expensive, but you're the only one on the server) or a VPS which stands for a Virtual Private Server. A VPS means that sections of a server are dedicated to you.

A VPS can be a nice compromise. It generally offers fast, reliable speeds and costs a lot less than a dedicated server.

Shared severs

If you're on a strict budget, one of the most popular services in the shared server arena is *HostGator* (http://26wp.com/hostgator) which starts at just $3.96 a month. *Vidahost* (http://26wp.com/vidahost) is a UK provider which starts at £2.99 a month (About 5 dollars). I have used both and thoroughly recommend either for getting started if keeping your initial expenses to a minimum is important for you.

HostGator

If you happen to be targeting people in the UK then your server should be based there as this gives an important signal to Google that your website is aimed at that particular audience. That's when a shared server like *Vidahost* is a good choice.

However, if the majority of your customers or prospective customers are based in the States, and you want to keep your website hosting costs to a minimum to begin with then *HostGator* is a great place to get started.

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Big Business Server:

You are looking at the other end of the spectrum, and considering a dedicated server, the *Rackspace* is one of the most popular choices. (http://26wp.com/rackspace).

However, a dedicated high-end server can cost more than $1,000 a month (depending on the number of visitors and storage requirements). At the end of the day you have to weigh things up between cost, performance, capacity, reliability, support and physical server location.

VPS:

This is an area of web hosting that is expanding in popularity. The nice thing about this type of web host is that although it starts off quite cheaply (about $20 per month), it can be expanded in capacity quickly and easily.

A VPS can be as fast and as reliable as a dedicated server, and because of the reasonable costs involved, it's a great option for most small to medium-sized businesses.

Looking at the latest web page speed test of http://www.26weekplan.com using the http://www.webpagetest.org service I can see that my home page loads in 1.7 seconds first time around and 0.3 seconds at second time of asking. That means that this site of mine is among the top 1% of the fastest sites in the world. Not bad at-all.

Site speed is becoming increasingly important as a slow site can put-off both visitors and search engines. Web page speed is something that you should be always testing and trying to improve.

WebPageTest.org
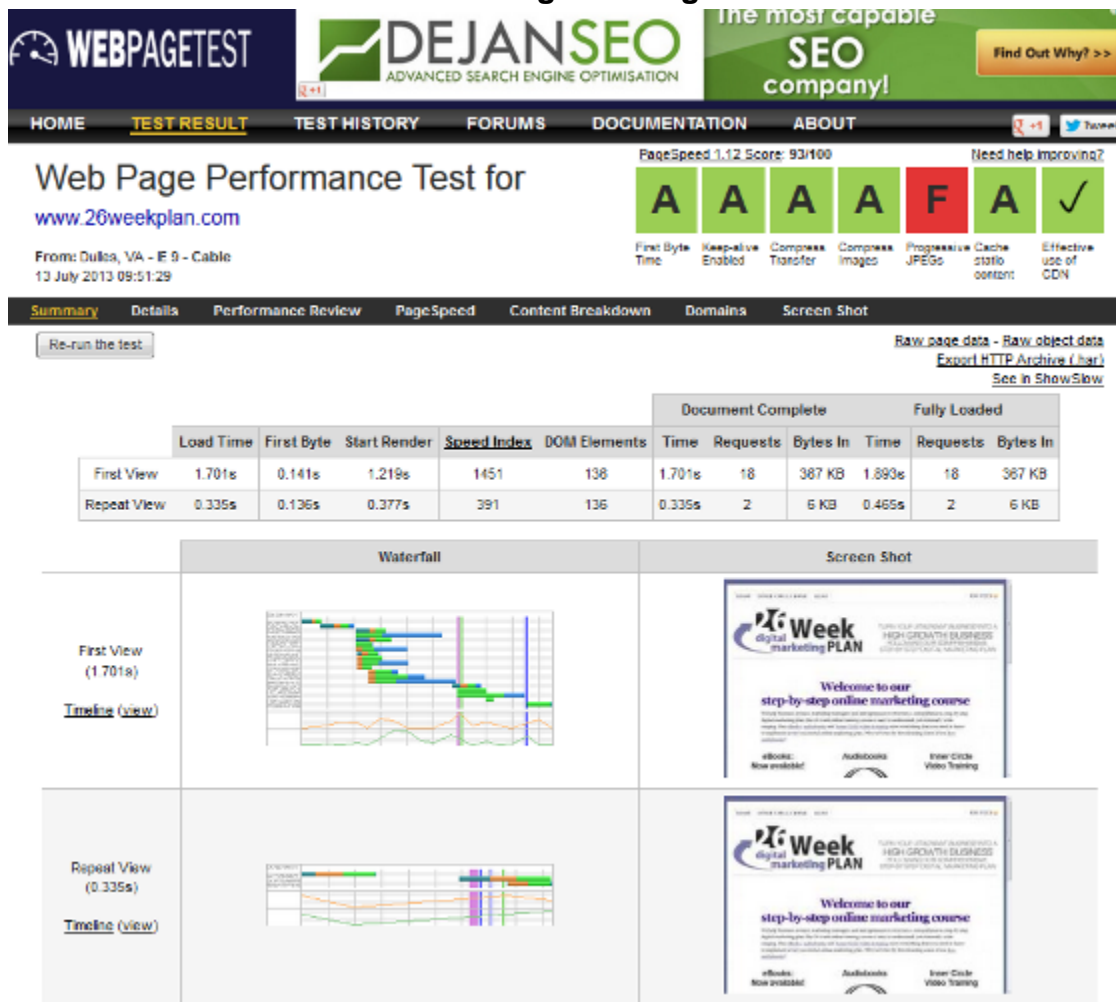
26weekplan.com's page loading speed test

If your site speed is worse than 10 seconds then this needs urgent attention. You will be losing many visitors and organic search ranking positions.

If your site speed is between 5 and 10 seconds then it's important that you improve your site speed as well – but not quite as life threatening as worse than 10 seconds.

However, even if your site speed is better than 5 seconds there is always room for improvement. Don't forget about constantly checking your website site speed.

Setting up your CMS:

I use and thoroughly recommend *WordPress* as a CMS for most websites as it is easy to use, personalise and upgrade. And best of all it's free. This software is probably the best choice for 90% + of businesses out there. It is simple to download and install on your server from http://wordpress.org and most shared servers automatically install it at a push of a button (This is one of the benefits of going with a shared host like *HostGator* or *Vidahost* to begin with – when you move onto a VPS you're probably better off getting a specialist to install and manage WordPress for you).

Getting Your Design Right

What your website looks like is just as important as the software and hosting, so you will need an appropriate theme for your *WordPress* installation. Themes are small software programs that change the look and navigation of your WordPress installation. Some themes are available for free, although better ones are paid for. Maximum price for a non-bespoke theme is around $200.

Theme Forest is a large software directory where you can get decent Themes for less than $50 (http://26wp.com/themeforest).

Woo Themes is another reliable provider of WordPress themes (http://26wp.com/woothemes).

However, *Thesis* is the theme that I decided to go with for the second incarnation of my *26-Week Digital Marketing Plan* website (http://26wp.com/thesis) (although I'm just in the process of launching version 3.0 of the site using a great new theme for marketing and membership sites – *OptimizePress 2.0* (http://26wp.com/optimizepress).

The latest version of Thesis is cutting edge, reduces the need for extra WordPress plugins and supports what it calls 'skins' to enhance the design and usability.

I've used a Thesis Skin from KolaKube (http://26wp.com/kolakube) called Marketers Delight, but there are new skins launching all the time, so make sure that you go with something that's right for your business rather than just copying me.

Thesis WordPress Theme

You don't have to do all of this yourself especially if you aren't a coder or designer. If you're a business owner you should generally be focusing more of your effort on strategy and marketing, not the technical aspects of building a website. I recommend using *oDesk* to find reliable outsourced team members (http://26wp.com/oDesk).

I have 4-5 great people working for me on *oDesk*, and I can't recommend the service highly enough. Although you're not going to always get the right person first time, if you persevere it will be worth it.

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7 quick tips on optimizing WordPress for SEO

Number 1 – Have pretty canonicalized URLs

"Canonicalization" means helping tell search engines the specific URL that you'd prefer them to use for each of your web pages.

There are lots of reasons why search engines may be displaying the wrong version of your URLs in their search results. For instance, there may be multiple ways to render the same page (i.e. www. and non-www versions). You may also be running adverts that use tracking codes which are retained in the URL. Unless you tell *Google* which version of the URL that should be indexed, *Google* will have to guess – and *Google* may often make the wrong guess which could significantly impact your search engine rankings.

Number 2 – Relevant Internal Linking

If you have content already on your site, it really should be linking between related pages in the most logical and efficient manner. For example, if you have a page about bread knives you should then link to other pages about knives that you have for sale; or perhaps link to other pages on your site with bread recipes.

Having logical internal linking helps communicate to search engines that these pieces of content are related and will give your site a better chance of long term ranking all of your pages for your target terms. However, if you don't link between your pages you're making it much harder for *Google* to determine the relevance and relatedness of each page.

Number 3 – Meta tags and *post URL* structure

Title tags and heading tags are easily controlled through a few different settings in *WordPress* if you have a good theme.

The URL structure of your website (how the address of each page on your website is formatted) can also be easily be controlled through one of the admin menus in *WordPress*. By selecting '*Settings*', and then '*Permalinks*' you can quickly and easily make the changes you require.

Complicated URL structures make it more difficult for both users and search engines to determine the nature of the page. A simple, short URL that contains a

few relevant keywords, slashes and dashes is generally considered to be the optimum format.

Using */%postname%.html* or */%postname%* as the permalink structure in your WordPress admin is one of the most popular and efficient options and therefore recommended. However, it should be noted that the best time to change your permalink structure is before your website launches. Changing your permalink structure after your website has already been included in search engine results could have an extremely negative impact on your site rankings. If this is the case then you should probably seek further professional consultation before you act.

Number 4 – URL Shortening Plugin

I also use a *WordPress* plugin called [SEO Slugs](http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/seo-slugs/) (http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/seo-slugs/) to remove any common words from my post name like 'a", "the" and "in'. This means that by using one of the suggested permalink structures above (*/%postname%.html*), a post entitled 'This is an example post' would have the permalink http://www.yourwebsite.com/example-post.html.

Without the *SEO Slugs* plugin this would have been http://www.yourwebsite.com/this-is-an-example-post.html.

In summary, make your URLs as efficient as possible. They should be short, search engine friendly, reader friendly and include a relevant keyword phrase

The default permalink structure in WordPress is */?p=123* which would mean that a post address would look like http://www.yourwebsite.com/?p=123.

Because this default version doesn't contain any keywords, and it includes a question mark, it means that the content on the page could be deemed less likely to be of a permanent nature. In short, change your permalinks to a more optimal format before you get started!

Number 5 – Internal Linking Plugin

A great plugin for improving internal linking is '*YARPP*' which stands for '*Yet another Related Posts WordPress Plugin'*. This plugin automatically determines other related posts and pages to link to and includes these links at the bottom of

each article. While it is good to also manually link within a post to other articles this *YARP* plugin saves time and is highly efficient.

Number 6 – WordPress SEO Plugin

Some themes are better optimized than others. You should check if your theme offers all the benefits offered by Yoast's *SEO plugin* (http://yoast.com/wordpress/seo/). If it doesn't, then this plugin could be very beneficial.

Number 7 – Title and Description Length Overview

Page titles should be 66 characters or less (including spaces), and meta-descriptions no more than approx.150 characters (again including spaces). If you don't follow these guidelines, you're likely to have text that is cut off in *Google*'s search results.

The more relevant your page titles and meta descriptions are to the user, the more likely you are to get a click through to your site from search engine results. And if your click through rates is higher than your competitors this should help to improve your organic rankings over time.

Tracking, measuring and testing

It is imperative to establish what your goals and objectives are when you set up your site to begin with. I would use the free *Google Analytics* tool (http://google.com/analytics) as it allows you to study where visitors come from, the number of visitors, when they arrive, what they do while on your site and much, much more.

Google Analytics

There are a lot of different goals you can set up when you are starting with *Google Analytics*. This can be newsletter subscriptions, comments, social bookmarking (using social buttons within your site), RSS feed subscriptions, and also transactions.

It is very important to track these results as you may find that your site received 10 visitors a day but of those 10, five may sign up to your RSS feed (if that is one of your goals). This shows you that these visitors are interested in what you are saying or selling.

Another traffic source may send 100 visitors each day to your site but you discover that these visitors just stay for a few seconds and leave. Tracking all of these metrics enables you to focus on relevant traffic and possibly even form partnerships with the best referring websites which will help you to improve your conversion rates in the future.

Important when you set up Google Analytics goals:

Be sure to put a financial value on each goal in *Google Analytics (*even if you are only guessing). This will provide you with access to a much wider range of report metrics.

For instance, you may be aware that ten per cent of your newsletter readers are customers, and that your average lifetime order value from each customer is $1000.

If this is the case then you would enter a *Google Analytics* goal value of $100 for each new newsletter sign-up.

Once you set up your goal values you are then able to see clearly the values for each form of referral traffic that is coming your way.

Split Testing

Using *Google Analytics* you can also start to set up split testing using the 'Content Experiments' tool that they provide. (Content Experiments used be called Google Website Optimizer.) This tool allows you to conduct A/B split tests which will let you see which design or piece of copy converts the best.

This is very important for Ecommerce sites where you are trying to sell something online. It is incredible how much a different heading, changing product images or adding testimonials etc. can alter the conversion rate of a particular page.

Even simple changes like the colour of your purchase button, or using 'buy now' instead of 'add to cart' within the text of your button can significantly affect results.

By conducting A/B or multivariable split tests you simply see which version of your web page performs the best and then select that version as the final version before proceeding with another experiment.

I have been managed websites with tens of thousands of visitors a day and have seen increases in conversion rates of over 20%. This results in a significantly improved revenue and profitability increase. Don't ever become complacent and assume if something is working well that it can't improve – because things can always get better!

Phase #2: Get Social and Turn on the Tap!

Phase #2 Get Social and Turn on the Tap

Start the *4-Phases of Digital Marketing* video at **27 minutes and 18 seconds** to watch the Phase #2 section of the seminar.

Watch the video here: **http://www.26weekplan.com/4phases**
(If you can, watch this video while reading this chapter.)

Publishing Quality Content Consistently

You may have a beautiful website that has a million bells and whistles on it but if you don't have a consistent amount of good unique content being added on a regular basis then *Google* will consider that your site might have gone stale and is not very relevant to today's users.

To avoid this possible 'stale' issue, quality and consistency and relevance of your content is absolutely key.

Make your articles lengthy, including images (Images from *Fotolia.com* cost about $1 each) and embedded videos (Search *YouTube* for related videos, they don't even have to be yours).

There are so many poor quality 300-400 word articles that you can buy for as little as $5 all over the internet. People actually buy these and put them on their site thinking that this will automatically make the search engines index them and start driving traffic.

It is all about quality these days!

Quality means lengthy articles (1,000-2,000 words) which are useful and relevant to your target market. This is the kind of content that people would naturally want to share on *Twitter*, *Facebook* and other social media sites.

Good consistency means really whatever regularity you are comfortable with but it should be at least one outstanding piece, once a month.

You can outsource this if you don't have the time. Just be sure to maintain a quality and a consistent voice that represents your brand well.

Where I find quality outsourced writers

As mentioned previously in this e-book, *oDesk* is the website I use and recommend to find outsourced workers (http://26wp.com/oDesk).

It's also the website I use to find quality outsourced writers.

oDesk

http://26wp.com/oDesk
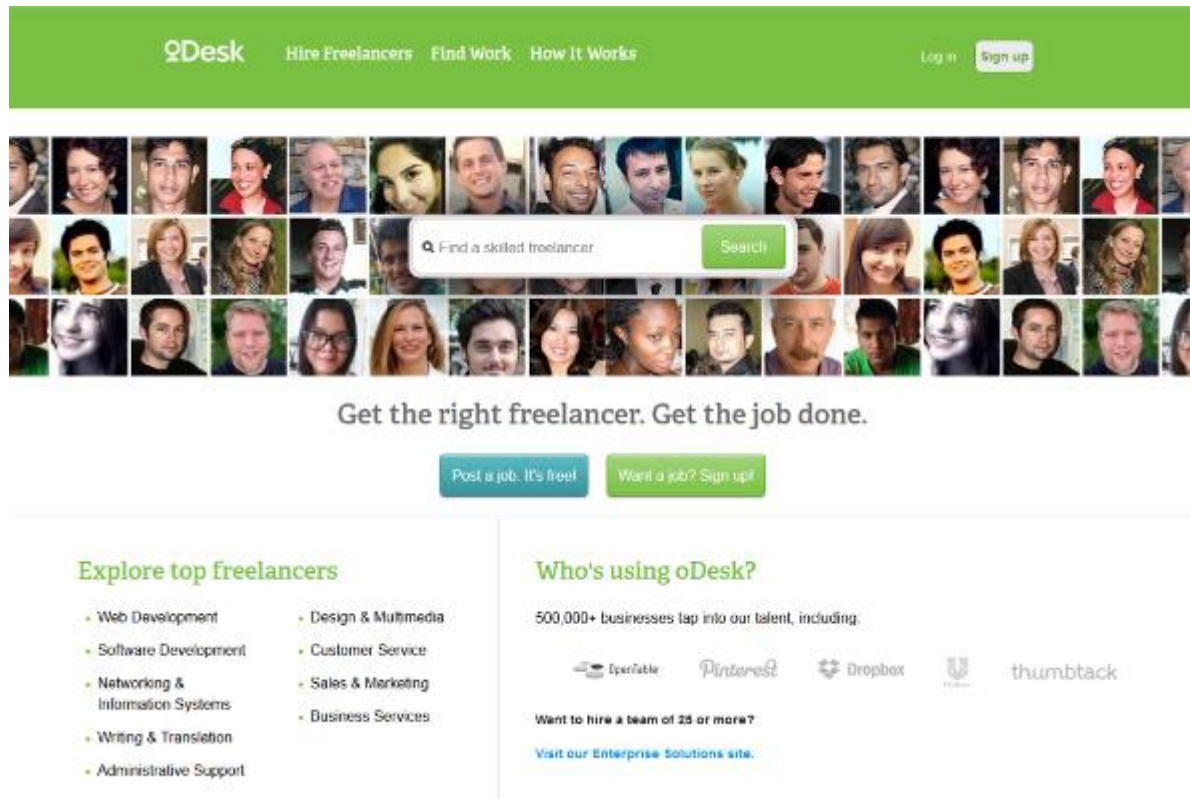
Here are some tips to finding great writers on *oDesk*:

- *Use only native language writers*

This helps to keep things consistent more in regards to tone and voice.

- *Search 4.5 stars and above on profiles*

oDesk has a system a bit like *eBay* that allows you to see previous feedback for a contractor. Obviously those with higher feedback and those that have already undertaken multiple previous contracts previously tend to be the best.

- *Search between $10 and $20 a hour*

This will get you quality but for a decent price that doesn't break the bank. You don't have to pay $100 an hour to find a good quality writer. *oDesk* also enables you to fix the hours per week to help with budgeting.

- *After doing the above, ask for a 1000+ word article as a trial.*

This is about 2 hours work and will let you see the quality of their writing and speed of writing articles. Sometimes it takes a bit of patience to find the right contractor and also for you both to be pushing in the same direction. Eventually you will find someone that will suit your brand and produce quality content for your business on a regular basis.

Syndicating Your Content Far And Wide

There are many ways that you can syndicate your content via *RSS* and social media. Obviously you want your content published first on your site to demonstrate to *Google* that you're the content originator, but an *RSS* feed helps you automatically make blog directories and subscribers aware as soon as you publish new content.

After registering your brand on all the major social websites then you can also share your content across social media platforms that encourage your followers and fans to share and re-tweet your articles.

There are also social media directories where you can submit your social profiles like your *Twitter* handle and your *Facebook* page. Then as your social popularity increases, this popularity will syndicate through the social directories, magnifying your social popularity.

One of the benefits of building your social presence is that it starts to build an additional stream of traffic back to your site, reducing your reliance on organic search or paid advertising.

How to Test Your Metrics with PPC

After you have set your site up you can start driving traffic to your selling pages and work on improving your conversion rates.

If you only have 10 visitors a day it will take a long time before you know what your conversion rates are. But if you have 1000 visitors a day for a short time you will quickly see what form of marketing is most effective.

The pay per click marketing service that most businesses should try first is *Google Adwords* (http://adwords.google.com). *Google* provides nearly 90% of the search traffic in the UK, and about 70% in the US. This has the potential to be the best source of new website visitors for you, at least to begin with.

Google AdWords

http://adwords.google.com

3 Keys to starting an effective PPC campaign:

1. Start with Google search only.

Initially you shouldn't advertise on any of *Google*'s content partner sites, or *Google* search partners. Focus only on having your ads displayed next to search results to drive the maximum click through rates as this will assure the most relevant traffic arrives.

Once you have a profitable campaign here you can then roll out to other options (*Google*'s content partner sites, or *Google* search partners) to see how they work for you.

2. Use exact match keywords and relevant landing pages.

Google by default will try and give you as many clicks and traffic as possible but that won't necessarily be very relevant traffic unless you go for exact match keywords. This is accomplished by putting your search terms you are going for in [square brackets].

You have 3 keyword targeting options – to either select broad match, where any word in your keyword phrase could target a search, phrase match, where your exact keyword phrase needs to be included in the search, but other words could be added to this target phrase by the user. To select this type of matching, you need to use quote marks around your keyword term. E.g. in this instance, ""red boots" would also target someone typing in "cheap red boots".

If you are only wanting to target the keyword phrase 'red boots' you need to put it in exact brackets like this: [red boots].

Your ad needs to focus on that phrase precisely and your title should have 'Red Boots' in it, with red boots also in the body copy. The landing page should also be focused on a relevant pair of red books.

Don't just drive people searching for such a specific phrase to your home page and hope they will then navigate through your site to find what they are looking for. Airlines are particularly bad for this. They'll advertise flights from a specific location to another, and then proceed to drive the traffic to their home page. This is very bad for conversion rates and costs a lot of unnecessary money.

3. Be careful with your budget and aim for position 3 or 4.

Don't bid more then you can afford to lose and don't bid too much. The way *Google Adwords* works means that position 1 and 2 can often get into a fight to

pay the most to get to the top, but I have found that position 3 and 4 can be even more profitable for your business. Try bidding a little bit more once you've established, after your campaign is profitable.

Owning Your Social Brand

Owning your social brand is important to ensure you have control over your brand name across as many different social media platforms as possible. Managing your social profile also helps you keep on top of what's been said about your brand online.

Get started with owning your social profiles by using the *Knowem* service (http://26wp.com/knowem) to automatically check 550 popular social networks to see if your brand is available. If it is – and it's a popular social network, take a few moments to register each popular social profile using your brand name. Even if you're not going to use it in the immediate future at least you've ensured that nobody else is going to own it!

Knowem

For example, if your business is called 'Holy Cow Hamburgers', you can research the availability of that brand on social networks using *Knowem* to find out where the exact name is available across all the major social platforms.

Remember, even if you aren't planning on using your brand name on YouTube or Facebook right now, if it is available grab it up if it is free. This way your brand will be less likely to be under cut or impersonated.

Get your social strategy kick-started:

Register and start on at least the big four social networks, *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Pinterest*, and *YouTube*. These are the best ones to begin with at this point.

Next, check out your competition and see what they are doing, especially in terms of content! What is working for them? (What content is being shared, and liked the most?)

Now start interacting yourself. Remember social networks are all about producing good and valuable interaction, *not* selling. It is about building relationships along with trust and interacting with your customers on a very real level.

Once you start showing that you know what you are talking about, people will start to recommend you and start buying from you. Generally just selling to your fans and followers on social media will put them off. Those that are on a social platform are mostly not in a mood to buy.

A Tool to Manage Your Social Accounts

One great way to manage your social discussions from a single dashboard is *Hootsuite* (http://26wp.com/hootsuite). From this website you can manage *Facebook*, *Twitter* and a few others without having to go anywhere else. You simply post your news, article or blog post in the area provided and it automatically sends your work out to all the platforms at once.

Hootsuite

Managing Your Reputation

What are people saying about you or your brand online? What if you are getting some bad comments on the different review sites? This can be damaging especially when it comes to big companies but it can also hurt small businesses as well.

Maybe you have heard of big companies like an airline that recently broke someone's valuable guitar, the person tweeted the picture of the destroyed guitar and their story of anguish.

The airline in particular didn't respond until it hit the news. How much better would it have been for that airline if they had caught it and dealt with it before hand?

This airline obviously didn't seem to be tracking their social brand and if they were they definitely didn't deal with the situation in a proactive manner.

There are two free services that can help you track your brand online:

Google Alerts (http://google.com/alerts)

Social Mention (http://socialmention.com)

With *Google Alerts* and *Social Mention*, just submit your brand name and say you want to receive updates via email the instant that it is mentioned online. A combination between this and tracking your own social profiles on Hootsuite enables you to deal with almost anything that presents itself, good or bad.

Phase #3: Broaden Your Base

Phase #3 – Broaden Your Base

*Start the 4-Phases of Digital Marketing video at **43 minutes and 38 seconds** to watch the Phase #3 section of the seminar.*

*Watch the video here: **http://www.26weekplan.com/4phases***
(If you can, watch this video while reading this chapter.)

Stop Relying On Just A Few Sources of Traffic

Some website owners think that their site will always rank high on *Google* organic search. They consider it to be their own cash cow. This is all well and good while it lasts but what do you do if *Google* suddenly doesn't like your website anymore and your rankings disappear overnight?

Broaden Your Base, the third phase of your digital marketing campaign is all about protecting you from that kind of reliance on one source of traffic and helping you to build a safer, long-term business with multiple streams of traffic.

The goal is to have more than 10 sources of significant website traffic. That way, if one source becomes 'blocked', your business can still thrive.

In this section I'm going to cover four methods that you can use to increase the quantity of your sources of traffic. (Note: There is over 26 hours of step-by-step video training inside the *26-Week Digital Marketing Plan* Inner Circle which covers this in much great depth. Visit http://www.26weekplan.com to find out more.)

Analyzing Your Competitions Backlinks

There are some tools out there that will show you where your competitors are getting there backlinks from and how profitable these backlinks are likely to be.

The first of these tools is *Open Site Explorer* from *Moz* (http://26wp.com/seomoz). Open Site Explorer has a free version where lets you see just 5 results. However, I'd encourage you to sign up with Moz's free trial to get the full set of results. You'll be amazed at how much information you can gleam from you competitor's sites using this tool.

Moz

Notes on Open Site Explorer from Moz

After you've conducted a search using *Open Site Explorer*, filter results to show followed and external links only.

You are generally not interested in how many internal links your competitor's sites have and *nofollow* links aren't thought to be valued by Google.

Just to be clear here, when adding a link to a website, you can specify whether you want it to be a 'follow' or 'no-follow' link. Follow links send 'Google link juice' which should help the receiving site. Adding the nofollow attribute in a link specifies to the search engines that no link juice should be passed.

(It used to be that all you have to do was focus on the quantity of links pointing to a page. Now it's more about the relevance and quality of links.)

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Next you need to sort the results by page and *domain authority* (You will see these tabs on the *Open Site Explorer* site). A domain authority score of 30 and above is a decent website, but a significantly authoritative site result will have a domain authority of 70 and above.

Figuring out how your competitors generated their most authoritative links is a very important part of SEO. If you can replicate the same links; alongside generating your own links then you're going to give yourself a good opportunity to rank just as high, if not higher than your competitors.

Blogger Outreach

In essence, Blogger Outreach means getting in touch with relevant, authoritative bloggers with a view to them writing about your products and services. Your end goal should be to persuade one of these bloggers to write a natural, unbiased piece that isn't paid for.

This isn't necessarily easy – but getting a blogger to write about you could drive an extremely authoritative link as well as direct traffic and social mentions.

If you're not sure who your industry-leading bloggers are, try searching on *BlogCatalog.com*, *Technorati.com*, and *Google Blog Search*. Then, determine which of the blogs you find have a home page rank between 3-5 and an *Alexa rank* of 100,000 to 500,000. This generally indicates a blog with a medium level of authority. (You're more likely to get someone with a medium level of authority to write about you to begin with.)

Beginning the blogger relationship:

Start by linking to the blogger's site from your 'blogroll' if you keep one on your website. This is a list of blogs that you like and read yourself.

Next you should subscribe to their updates via RSS, so when they produce a piece that is relevant and very useful, respond to the post with a relevant and useful comment. This means add something of real value not just 'great post, thanks for sharing'.

Also, reference their posts and link to them from your own blog posts. An advantage of using WordPress is that it automatically notices when blog posts mention other blog posts. When that happens, WordPress will then send an

automatic message to that blog owner, notifying them of this fact (which is called a *trackback*). If you do this enough, bloggers will start to check your site out.

Guest Blogging

Guest Blogging isn't the same as Blogger Outreach. Guest Blogging is when you get the opportunity to post an article on a top industry blog in exchange for an author bio and a link back to your site and social profiles.

To find such opportunities, search Google for 'guest writers wanted' plus your industry segment or niche in Google. Alternatively an even better would be to take time to form a relationship with a top industry blogger before asking them for a guest posting opportunity.

Start to collate a list of guest post opportunities and prioritize them by page rank, domain authority and relevance. Look to see if they have a *Facebook* page and how many likes they have, check the amount of Twitter followers and if there are lots of comments on their blogs.

So do your research first, then write to them and say you have a good article available as a guest post. Someone will take you up on the offer eventually!

For example – searching Google

"Guest writers wanted" travel

The above Google search delivers over 4000 results. There are definitely enough guest posting opportunities out there. It's just a case of finding them and selecting the right ones!

After You Get Accepted

After you're accepted make sure that the post you write is lengthy, relevant and informative. I think that 1000 words is a good length, and don't try to sell your business from within the article. If people like your article they'll search for your author bio and find your website link there.

It's also a good idea to share your published guest post on your own social profiles. That way you'll demonstrate to your own followers that you're an industry leader and help to make the piece more popular.

Affiliate Marketing

Affiliate marketing is also something I suggest that people look at as part of the Broaden Your Base phase.

Setting up an affiliate program means that you're managing your own partnership program and paying partners to refer you business.

Generally an affiliate program pays out a commission based upon a percentage of sale value, although you could also use an affiliate program to pay out on a cost-per-click or cost-per-lead basis.

You can either host your own affiliate software (e.g. iDev Affiliate) or use a 3rd party tracking solution (e.g. Tradedoubler). The right solution depends on the size of your business and whether or not you want to appear on an affiliate network.

Affiliate marketing and other ways to 'broaden your base' are covered in greater depth inside the *26-Week Digital Marketing Plan* Inner Circle (http://www.26weekplan.com/innercircle).

Phase #4: Broaden Your Horizon

Phase #4 – Broaden Your Horizon

Start the *4-Phases of Digital Marketing* video at **54 minutes and 50 seconds** to watch the Phase #4 section of the seminar.

Watch the video here: **http://www.26weekplan.com/4phases**
(If you can, watch this video while reading this chapter.)

Take advantage of new media

Videos, podcasts and apps are increasingly important elements in a marketing funnel for many businesses. The word funnel is very important here as it conjures the image of the many different ways you are attracting traffic to your site. As long as your website converts effectively, each funnel can add significant value.

Audio Interviews/Podcasts

Audio interviews, if published correctly (as a podcast) can be a great way to build your profile, content syndication and SEO.

If you send an email to a popular blogger, asking them to link to your site then you're unlikely to meet with a positive response.

However, if you contact them directly and say you are performing interviews for your website on a topic they recently wrote an article or blog post on, and that you would love to feature them as an industry expert then you're much more likely to receive a positive response.

And if they do agree to be interviewed, and they're happy with the interview, it's quite likely that they'll choose to link back to the interview wherever you choose to publish it, hence your site gaining a high-quality link from an extremely relevant site.

So take that extra time and effort to do something different. You will find that it really starts to pay dividend.

Software and Services Recommended to Record and Publish a Podcast:

I recommend starting with *Skype* and *Skype* recording software (I use *MX Skype Recorder* but there are also a few other tools like *Pamela* that record Skype calls).

After creating your audio interview file, you can edit this using the free audio editing software Audacity. This is a great tool for editing the interview cutting out parts you don't like.

Another great free piece of software to use is called '*The Levelator*' which can level out the volume of a recording automatically. This is really useful if you've conducted an interview and both parties are recorded at distinctly different volumes.

Going into full detail about how to podcast is beyond the scope of this e-book. However, Podcasting is week #22 of the 26-Week Digital Marketing Plan, so you can watch an hour-long video on how to podcast inside the *Inner Circle*.

Transcribing your interview

I thoroughly recommend transcribing your recording using a service like *Scribie* (http://26wp.com/scribie). This turns the interview into some great readable content as well.

Some people prefer audio, others prefer reading an interview. This way you're catering for a larger audience. Plus, when you offer a transcription then you're making life a lot easier for search engines to rank your content.

Scribie

I've used *Scribie* quite often in the past and combining quality of results and value for money, it's one of the best transcription services I've used.

Their standard rate is $1.50 per audio minute (at the time of writing), but you also get a significant discount if you're willing to wait a little longer for your transcription file.

It's still worthwhile proofing your transcription before you publish, but on the whole the Scribie team gets it pretty much perfect each time.

Publishing your Podcast

Publish the podcast as an audio file associated with a blog post using 'Podcast' as the blog post category. That way your blog will generate an RSS feed specifically for the podcast.

You should also be using a decent audio hosting service like Libson which starts at just $5 a month. Amazon S3 is a good alternative as well.

A specialist audio host will ensure that your content is delivered reliably, and that you don't get into trouble with a regular web host.

Syndication

I mentioned RSS briefly and this is a very important element in the podcast marketing mix.

Take your blog category RSS feed that you're going to use as your RSS feed and 'burn' this using the Feedburner service to create an alternative, trackable feed URL. Make sure you select the 'podcaster' box when you burn your feed.

You should then submit this new feed to the top podcasting directories. This means that whenever you publish a fresh episode that it's automatically syndicated to these directories.

SEO Benefits

Most podcast services also add in a link to your podcast home page, offering you more SEO 'link juice'. When a post is highly syndicated (and this includes a podcast episode) I also suggest you incorporate a link or two from the main text body back to your site. That way, search engines will be confident that you are the originator of the content.

E-books

Something else you can do to increase the quantity of funnels of traffic into your business model is to publish a free e-book, accessible via an email opt-in.

This way, as well as demonstrating your knowledge and abilities, you're also driving potential customers into your email autoresponder sequence.

This is something that I do on multiple websites, an example of which is the *13 Pillars of Internet Marketing* (www.13pillars.com).

The 13 Pillars of Internet Marketing

That page above actually converts at 36%. This means that 36% of the traffic that arrives at this page signs up to receive the e-book in exchange for their name and email address. This is a very strong opt-in rate for a 'squeeze page'.

To make this page I used a WordPress theme called *OptimizePress* (http://26wp.com/optimizepress).

However, having a single-page squeeze page can be quite an aggressive marketing tactic. You probably wouldn't want to have this sort of entrance page for your main brand. That's why I have another brand called the *13 Pillars of Internet Marketing* that I use for lead capture – and then after people subscribe I introduce them to the *26-Week Digital Marketing Plan*.

However with the recent launch of the new www.26weekplan.com website (using OptimizePress 2.0 as the theme - http://26wp.com/optimizepress) I may well choose to shut down the 13 Pillars site and redirect it to the 26-Week Plan site. Watch this space!

OptimizePress

Kindle E- books

The great thing about *Kindle* books is that they make it so easy for people to purchase your content, and within one minute have it downloaded to their portable device.

And e-books aren't necessarily just a content destination. Although you should always try to deliver a decent amount of quality content in an e-book, you can also use them as a platform to raise your profile in your industry, and make your readers aware of your additional portfolio of products and services.

Unfortunately there many e-books out there that are just cynical sales tools. They don't offer any valuable content and essentially they're just a long sales letter.

Hopefully you can see that although I'm using this e-book as a means to introduce you to the *26-Week Digital Marketing Plan* Inner Circle, I'm also extremely passionate about ensuring that I give you as many nuggets of information that I can as well – so you can improve your business immediately.

The general consensus among many business authors is that it isn't easy making a lot of money selling books – but publishing *Kindle* books can be a superb way to raise your industry profile.

The place to go to find out more about making your own e-book is http://kdp.amazon.com. It's not difficult to create your own *Kindle* books using *Word* and converting that into Kindle format using Amazon's software.

Kindle Direct Publishing from Amazon

http://kdp.amazon.com

Although this *4-Phases of Digital Marketing* e-book isn't published in *Kindle* format, I am currently in the process of publishing the series of *26-Week Digital Marketing books* for Kindle. Find out more / download them here: http://www.26weekplan.com/books

iPad Magazines

I also have a magazine published on *iTunes* by the name of '*Digital Marketing Monthly*'. You can find it by searching on your iPad or iPhone app store for 'Digital Marketing Monthly'.

Digital Marketing Monthly iPad Magazine

Digital Marketing Monthly currently has over 1000 subscribers, and the subscriber rate is currently growing at a rate of about 25% a month.

And just because to choose to produce a magazine doesn't mean that you have to write all of the content yourself. I have many contributors who are more than happy to have their content featured in an *iPad* magazine.

Video Sharing

Video sharing is another really effective way to build up your profile as an expert in your industry. I initially recorded what you're reading at the moment as a seminar, and I also chose to give the video recording of that seminar away for free (http://www.26weekplan.com/4phases).

Just like delivering as much high quality content as you can in an e-book, if you choose to host your own seminar, with a view to publishing the video recording on YouTube, you should focus on providing as much value as possible.

Once recorded, upload your video to *YouTube* and seed with initial social traffic (full details on how to do this are available inside the Inner Circle – http://www.26weekplan.com/innercircle).

YouTube is now the 2nd biggest search engine online after *Google*, and you can drive a lot of traffic back to your site from this great video sharing facility. I have a seminar video that I published around 2 years ago that has already had more than 60,000 views. If I can do it, you can do it.

Make Your Links Clickable

Recently *YouTube* have introduced an interesting facility – if you associate a website with your YouTube channel, you can now build clickable links as an overlay on your videos.

In addition to that, every time to include a link in your video description, as long as you begin it with *http://* this link will also become clickable.

Make a Quality Video

Like producing quality content for your website, videos need to be high quality as well. This means that a lot of thought needs to go into the content and it needs to be professionally produced if possible.

I have found that longer videos are easier to rank on YouTube – that's because a longer, high quality video naturally differentiates itself from shorter, inferior competing videos.

Optimizing Your Video

It's also important to conduct some keyword research, so that you include an optimum keyword phrase within your video title, description and tags. If Google perceives your video to be extremely relevant for a particular keyword phrase, it may also choose to include your video within its universal search listing pages.

Create a Call to Action

As well as delivering outstanding content in your video, you also need to consider what your desired viewer call-to-action should be.

For example, at the end of my 4-Phases of Digital Marketing seminar I invite viewers to join the *26-Week Digital Marketing Plan* Inner Circle (http://www.26weekplan.com/join)

As you hopefully can tell, I try not to sell. All I try to do is point out that I'd like to help viewers to continue along their digital marketing strategy journey. I do this by explaining what's included and let people make the decision for themselves whether or not it's right for them.

Hopefully you might think that the *26-Week Digital Marketing Plan* Inner Circle might be able to assist you. Here's a summary of what it includes…

Phase 1 includes 6 hours of video training on:

- *Week 1: Competitor Analysis* – determining who your competitors are, and what their strengths are
- *Week 2: SEO Keyword Research* – how to pinpoint the keyword phrases you should be targeting
- *Week 3: Website Framework* – your selection of website Content Management System and how it impacts your marketing activities
- *Week 4: Authority Content* - why publishing great, relevant content is essential and how best to do it
- *Week 5: On-Site SEO* – how to structure your site categories, pages and your essential site coding to appeal to search engines
- *and Week number 6: Visitor Analytics* – how to track and analyse your website and other digital property visitors; and improve upon your conversion rates

Moving on to Phase 2: Get Social & Turn on the Tap!

This phase is where you really start to drive traffic to your website and build your reputation as an industry leader.

Phase number 2 includes over 7 hours of video training, such as…

- *Week 7: Opt-In Email Marketing* – how to best build your own opt-in list of subscribers
- *Week 8: Business Blogging* – taking advantage of blogging as a publishing platform
- *Week 9: Social Media Management* – build your brand on the various social networks and interact with your potential customers on their terms
- *Week 10: Content Syndication* – automatically distribute your content to multiple networks as soon as it's published
- *Week 11: Press Release Distribution* – steadily pulling together your own database of relevant industry contacts and building relationships with journalists
- *Week 12: Pay Per Click Advertising* – an excellent way to test your conversion metrics and drive initial relevant traffic to your site
- *and Week number 13: Online Reputation Management* – be sure to know what's being said about your brand, and how to deal with negative public opinion

Phase 3: Broaden Your Base

Broadening your base is about building multiple funnels of traffic to your web properties; that way you're reducing your reliance on single sources of traffic.

This phase includes another 7 hours of video training that includes

- *Week 14: Directories & Curated Lists* – getting your website listed in top industry resources is a great way of increasing your authority
- *Week 15: Local Search & Reviews* – increase the likelihood that your business appears in local search results and ensure that it is perceived as a trustworthy, high-quality service provider
- *Week 16: Competitor Backlinks* – by analysing who is linking to your competitors and how those links occurred you're able to mimic your competitor's success
- *Week 17: Blogger Outreach* – how to pinpoint your industry's leading bloggers and get them to review your products and services
- *Week 18: Guest Posts & Authorship* – continuing to build your profile as a quality content producer will help to raise your industry standing
- *Week 19: 2nd Tier Links & Social Signals* – search engines not only look at the links that point directly to your site, but also your overall linking and social discussions neighbourhood

- *and Week number 20: Affiliate Marketing & Partnerships* – incentivising partners to drive traffic to your site can significantly broaden your brand footprint

Concluding with Phase 4: Broaden Your Horizon

The Broaden Your Horizon phase introduces new media into your marketing mix.

This fourth phase includes a further 6 hours of video training, including:

- *Week 21: Video Marketing* – how to produce, publish and seed your videos – and build long-term views and traffic back to your site
- *Week 22: Podcasting* – audio is an increasingly important medium, and this can integrate with the rest of your digital marketing activities
- *Week 23: E-Books & Document Sharing* – how to quickly and easily publish your own e-books - including Kindle books - and how to drive traffic back from these books to your website
- *Week 24: Apps & Magazines* – your trainer David Bain has had a lot of a success through publishing an iPad and iPhone magazine, and here he shares exactly how he did it
- *Week 25: Feeder Brands* – you needn't just have the one website – and having multiple brands can be a very effective marketing tactic
- and *Week number 26: Offline Meets Online* – how to utilise offline marketing activities to assist with your online success

That's a total of over 26 hours of step-by step video training materials, walking you precisely through how to set-up, optimise and comprehensively market anything you want to do online.

After showing you how to carry out each marketing activity, we finish off each video with an easy-to-follow step-by-step action plan, making it as simple as possible for you to implement everything you learn in the plan.

And we don't just tell you what to do – we share 13 comprehensive case studies from different industries with you on how each different type of business can take advantage of the various recommended digital marketing strategies.

For example, we'll show you a local business that specialises in providing hypnotherapy services, and review how they can utilise local SEO and reviews.

We also look at an LED lighting e-commerce store to demonstrate how to improve on-site conversion rates and product syndication opportunities; before

moving on to a holiday home rental business and how they could grow their business significantly by distributing content via apps.

Plus 9 more in-depth case studies.

No matter your business, you can take advantage of the *26-Week Digital Marketing Plan* inner circle.

And no matter your industry level – whether you're a marketing director, a trainee or a solo entrepreneur, being a member of the *26-Week Digital Marketing Plan* can drive your business forward.

This plan works. It isn't some fly-by-night 'make money online scheme' though. It's a long-term success, quality-driven approach for real businesses.

If you're serious building a successful brand and becoming an industry leader, then the *26-Week Digital Marketing Plan* Inner Circle is for you.

Remember, following too many systems and pieces of advice is often the reason why many online marketing plans don't work as effectively as they should do.

You are going to be amazed at how efficiently and effectively you can move your digital marketing efforts forward when you follow a plan that provides everything you need to do, all at the right time and without overwhelm.

Regardless of previous experience, online marketing knowledge, budget and time, anything you want to achieve online is now within your grasp.

When you join the 26-Week Digital Marketing Plan Inner Circle you get immediate access to all of the training materials – that's over 26 hours of step-by-step video training.

What are you waiting for? Let's get started. Visit **http://www.26weekplan.com/join** to join the *26-Week Digital Marketing Plan* Inner Circle today and we'll see you on the inside.