

How to Create a Successful Marketing Plan for Your eCommerce Business

Unlock your eCommerce growth by having a thorough digital marketing plan. Learn how to effectively plan a successful digital marketing strategy for your online store – from identifying audiences, resourcing, timescales and more.



statement.

We help companies grow in a digital world.
www.statementagency.com

About Statement

Statement is an award-winning digital agency based in Wakefield, West Yorkshire. We are experts in digital marketing, working across a variety of industries - from retail and eCommerce to education and professional services.

We are a commercially-focused team specialising in retail and eCommerce businesses; finding creative ways to achieve our client's goals and working in partnership with our clients for long term success.

If you want to learn more about how we can help your business grow in an ever-changing digital world, visit our website at statementagency.com or get in touch by calling us on 01924 334 187.



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Your eCommerce Business

You probably know a lot about your business and your online store - especially if you created the company and have been around since the beginning - but it's good practice to root each marketing campaign with a review of your brand. Things change very quickly in the eCommerce industry - from new technology to new legal requirements. Whilst it will have the same foundations, your business will have grown and changed since you began.

Ask yourself the following questions and write them down. Before any marketing campaign, look at these answers and remind yourself of business aims and business threats. A solid foundation in your brand will give a lot of clarity to your marketing.

? What are the strengths of your brand?

? What are the weaknesses of your brand?

? What is your brand's unique selling point?

? What are your key revenue sources?

? What threatens your business?

? Who are your biggest competitors?

? What are your business goals?

? What do you want to achieve with your marketing?

Now that you have an overview of your brand, you can begin to identify who you want to target in your marketing campaign.

Audiences

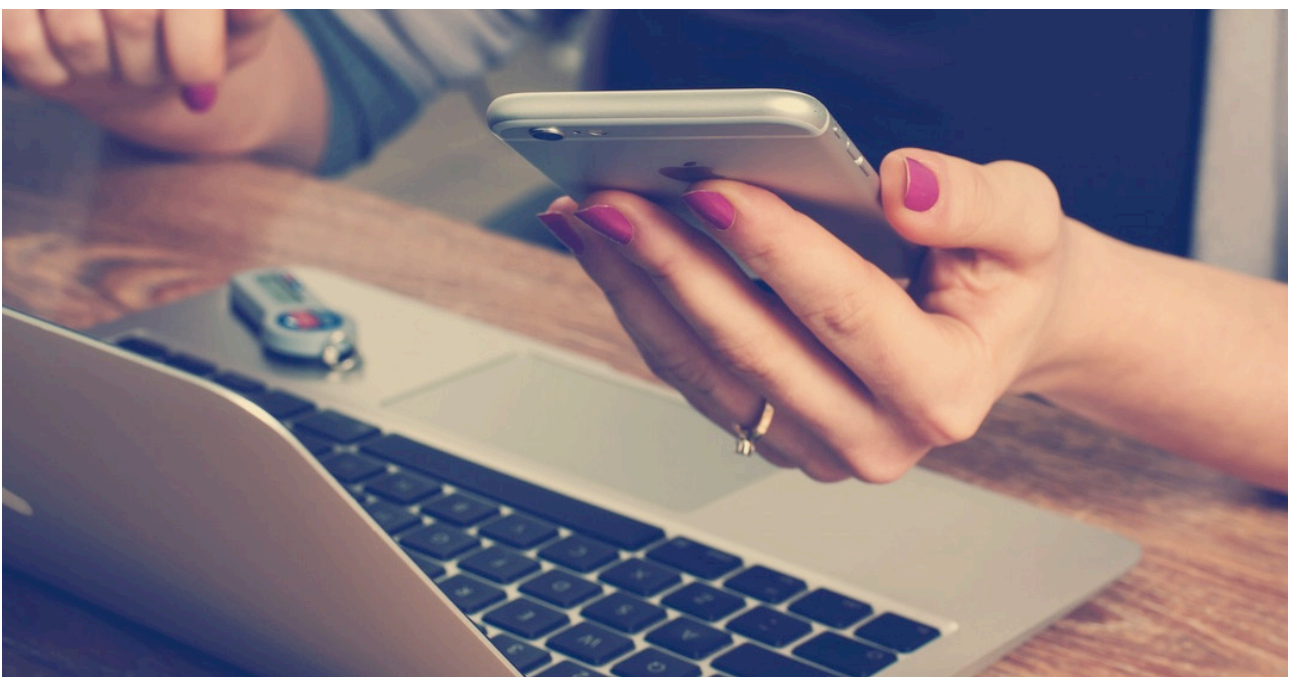
Your digital strategy relies on your audience and your customers - from your key messages to the platforms you choose. Therefore, you should identify your audience before you begin any of the production of marketing collateral.

We always recommend creating 'brand cameos', or personas, which are helpful for when you are creating marketing activity. You want to be able to imagine your reader and make sure that what you're writing is appealing to them.

Many online stores have different types of customers. An online childcare store will have mothers and fathers who will have very similar, but also very different, intentions. The company will also have grandparents and friends in the gift market who will buy with completely different needs from the parents. You will probably have an idea of these already and might even have them written down somewhere.

The idea of the brand cameos is that you create an imaginary person for each different audience type - complete with name. The mother becomes Emma, the father becomes David, and the grandmother becomes Angela and so on. You should also assign each cameo an age bracket and other top-level demographics such as location and general interests. Another benefit of establishing these top-level traits is that you can specifically target them in digital advertising so that your posts get seen by the people you want to engage.

It's also important to have a general idea of what motivates your customers to make a purchase. Will they buy your product for a special occasion? Will they buy your product because of an emergency? Will they buy your product on a continual basis? Once you have an idea of this, you will be able to plan your marketing activity according to each audience's needs.



Copy out the table below and complete two or three brand cameos for the different audiences that your online store targets. To help you get a clear picture of your customer, the [YouGov profiler](#) is a really helpful tool which generates brand cameos for big brands.

Name			
Age			
Location			
Interests			
Monthly Spare Income			
What other brands do they like?			
What is the purpose of their purchase?			

Now that you have a brand cameo for each audience type, you can begin to brainstorm which platforms would best suit these audiences.

Platforms

So you have an up-to-date overview of your brand, and you have identified who you want to target. Now you need to establish which platforms you are going to use to best reach these audiences. It's good to be on as many relevant platforms as you can (but only if it is manageable) - brands who have multiple touchpoints with potential customers [can convert them 2 ½ times faster](#) than brands with very few touchpoints.

There are some core marketing platforms that we always recommend having and many business owners have concerns over some of them:

An easy to use, mobile-friendly online store

It's important that you own one of your platforms. That way, you are not controlled and limited by a third party. An online store can act as a central hub for much of your marketing activity. Every audience type is somewhat familiar with a website, whether they're nine or ninety-nine.

A useful blog with helpful guides, tips and advice

Your blog should be on your online store (not on an external platform such as Blogger or Tumblr) and it's a fantastic tool for bringing in traffic. A blog can often read like a book or newspaper which is a familiar format for all of us.

An email newsletter

All audience types use email in some capacity - we're all familiar with the platform so you won't be at risk of alienating anybody. This platform is great because you can directly interact with your customers in a place that feels private - you are directly sending them information as opposed to sending out a press release or social media post that can be seen by anybody.

A presence on social media

We usually recommend Twitter and Facebook for most businesses (although some B2B companies may want to switch Facebook with LinkedIn). It's common for a business owner to disagree and think that their audience isn't on these platforms but chances are they are! A significant proportion of people use Facebook and a lot of people are on Twitter so they're great platforms to begin a social media presence on. Consumers also expect that their favourite brands are on these platforms.

What other platforms are there?

There are hundreds of digital platforms to choose from, especially when it comes to social media. That is why it's important to really understand your customer and figure out where to be.

Depending on your audience, you may want to work with:

- 📷 Instagram
- 📷 Snapchat
- 📷 Vine
- 📺 YouTube
- 📷 Tumblr
- ➕ Mobile Apps
- ➕ Industry-specific websites such as Houzz
- ➕ Offline platforms that you can integrate your digital strategy with
- ➕ Bloggers and vloggers

You may also want to have a Google AdWords campaign if you have the budget but this can often be costly if not managed by an expert.



So now you have a brief overview of which platforms you could be on, add an extra line underneath your brand cameos and write down which platforms you think that these audiences are actively using - be sure to include website, blog, email and social as your core platforms and add any extras.

If you have a young audience, then you'll want to be on Snapchat and Vine. If you have industry experts, then industry-specific websites and bloggers will be useful.

Write down a list of all of the platforms that you intend on using - now you can begin to plan how you will resource each platform.

Resourcing

Resourcing can be a struggle for many online stores - especially for a digital strategy. How do you know if you have the capability to be active on all of the platforms you have chosen?

Responsibilities

A digital strategy brings plenty of new responsibilities to the table that many traditional marketers don't expect - whilst still maintaining many of the usual ones.

- + Drafting content and posts
- + Proofreading
- + Posting and using the platforms
- + Keeping up to date with new trends and features
- + Ensuring platforms are secure and safe
- + Responding to user's comments
- + Analysing and reporting

Now take those responsibilities and multiply them by however many platforms you intend on using!

If some of these responsibilities are neglected, there is the risk that your digital strategy may not be as successful as you hoped. This is why it's important to consider where you will find the resource.

In-House Resource

There are many benefits to keeping your digital strategy within your in-house team. Firstly, it is generally more cost-effective if you already have a marketing department within your eCommerce business. Secondly, an in-house team generally has a clearer feel for your brand and business.

But there are many challenges which come with using your in-house team. Chances are that your marketing team already has plenty of activity to plan and implementing a digital strategy can be a huge amount of extra time on your marketers' plates.

Not only will your team need extra time for content writing, social management and monitoring digital advertising, they will also need time to keep up with the latest digital innovations. The industry moves very quickly and using out-dated practices can be detrimental to your activity.

The extra hours are going to have to come from somewhere and for many, this may mean that you cut down on PR activity or cut down on creative work.

Another potential issue is that many existing marketers are not specialists in digital. As expected, digital marketing often requires a certain amount of technical knowledge and it also needs an altered mindset. People use digital in a different way to traditional platforms such as print – and the marketing needs to be used differently too. If your in-house team doesn't have any expertise in digital, this could mean that your marketing activity isn't as effective as it could be.

Outsourcing to an eCommerce Agency

Finding a reliable eCommerce agency also has some benefits that don't come with an in-house team. A digital-specialist agency will be experts on the digital platforms you want to use and will be keeping up to date on a regular basis. Digital marketing changes so often it can be hard to keep up with the current trends and current best practices - what was a beneficial strategy five years ago is now extremely harmful.

An outsourced agency can address many of the above issues. They give your existing team the time they need to focus on traditional platforms, they are specialists in the industry and they usually have a committed attitude to keeping up with the latest digital trends.

If you outsource, you have more in-house resource to focus on the big picture marketing - it's common for a marketing department to focus on traditional collateral whilst outsourcing all of the digital to an agency.

In-House Team and Agency Collaboration

Whilst both have benefits, the best approach is usually to have a mix of both - but it's always crucial that you find a digital agency that really understands your brand and your team. You might want to hire an agency on a consultancy basis or you may want to hire them to do all of the production whilst you work with them on strategy. Another common approach is to hire an agency to only work on specific platforms such as social or content - but this is only effective if the brand and the agency work closely together to make sure that their messages are integrated and in sync.

It's crucial that you find an eCommerce agency that really understands your brand and your team. Do you know enough about digital to keep the production in-house? Do you have the budget to hire an agency? Failure to effectively resource will ultimately lead to the failure of your digital campaigns.

Timescales

So you have the foundations of a digital strategy - you know what your goals are, you know who your audience is, what platforms to use and you know how you will resource it. Now onto timescales.

When you're creating marketing collateral, it's important to know the following:

- + The date it will be drafted
- + The date it will be proofread by
- + The date it will be posted
- + The people responsible for all of the above

These dates will differ from company to company depending on resource. Some companies don't have enough team members to create a blog post every month whilst others have the capacity to do one every day.



Having a calendar is a great way to keep track of timescales - even if it is a simple spreadsheet.. Have a column for each of your platforms and have each row as a date of the month. See our example on the next page.

This example is a simple version of what you could have but it's a clear way to see who is doing what and when.

Also, if somebody misses a deadline, it's important to note this so that you have a historical record of your activity. Deadlines will be inevitably missed so another essential element of planning is contingency.

Date	Facebook	Blog	Email
Monday 1st	Post social post about new launch Henry		
Tuesday 2nd		Draft blog post - 'How to dress for a wedding' Emma	
Wednesday 3rd		Proofread blog post - 'How to dress for a wedding' George	
Thursday 4th			Draft email newsletter about new launch Rachel
Friday 5th		Post blog post - 'How to dress for a wedding' Wendy	
Saturday 6th			Post email newsletter about new launch Rachel

Contingency

What is likely to go wrong when you're implementing a digital strategy for your eCommerce business? It's easy to focus your efforts on being reactive to problems but planning is about being proactive.

Make a short list of potential issues and be prepared - note how you can prevent the issue. Some common problems are:

- + Hacked accounts
- + Customer complaints and bad press
- + Missed deadlines
- + Technology failures

Some of the above are clearly preventable and some aren't. You can easily prevent accounts from being hacked by having a secure password - but complaining customers are harder to prevent.

Whilst you can't control every potential issue, it's good practice to be prepared and consider your options for when a problem inevitably occurs.

Analysis

Analysis is a step for after you've started your digital strategy - but you shouldn't forget about it in the planning process. You want to make sure that you get a return on investment from your marketing activity and you'll only know this through your analysis and reporting.

So, when you are planning your activity, what metrics are you going to use to analyse your success? Make a note of these metrics next to your list of platforms for when you come back to report on them.

There are dozens of metrics to choose from so it's important not to report on every single metric or you will have no actionable data. Figure out the metrics that best align with your goals. See the table below for a list of some of the common ones and the goals they best correlate to.

For example, if you were solely focused on getting your brand noticed by as many potential customers as you could, you would want to measure Facebook and Twitter Post Impressions and Website Visitors.

Once you have established which metrics you want to report on, you can begin to set up the tools to do so. If you want to report on your website and blog, you will need to sign up to Google Analytics - a free website reporting tool. You will also want to make sure you have activated Facebook and Twitter Analytics if you want to measure the success of your social activity.

Below is a sample analytics framework with some key metrics for each of the major platforms you may be using.

Platform	Metric	Goal
Facebook	Fans Post Engagements Post Impressions	Brand Awareness Customer Engagement Brand Awareness
Twitter	Followers Post Engagements Post Impressions	Brand Awareness Customer Engagement Brand Awareness
Email	Open Rates Click-Through Rates	Customer Engagement Customer Engagement
Blog	Pageviews Bounce Rate	Brand Awareness Customer Engagement
Website	Visitors Bounce Rate Visits from Social Orders	Brand Awareness Customer Engagement Customer Engagement Increased Sales
Google Adwords	Orders Impressions Clicks Cost	Increased Sales Brand Awareness Customer Engagement Profitability

We hope that you have found our guide useful and we wish you the best of luck in planning your next digital campaign and growing your eCommerce business.

We know that the planning stage of digital marketing is often missed either because of time, lack of digital knowledge or general uncertainty of what to do.

If you have any questions or want some help with your marketing plan, then don't hesitate to get in touch. We'll be more than happy to have an informal chat and figure out how best we can support you and your online store.

Next Steps

Speak to us on the phone



Give us a call
on 01924 334 187

Book a free consultation



Speak with one of our digital
experts at a time to suit you

Send us your project brief



We'll review your project & get
back to you to discuss further

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