

10 Tips for Digital Marketing Success in 2016

2015 is in the books and it was another exciting year for marketing, with increased employment of behavioral marketing, a heightened focus on the customer journey, and promising new cognitive and predictive technologies opening up tantalizing possibilities for how marketing might improve the customer experience. To help marketers stay ahead of the curve and provide ideas for building unbreakable bonds with customers and prospects, we posted more than 125 blog entries in 2015.

In this tip sheet, we share 10 of our favorite tips from 10 of our most popular 2015 blog posts. You'll find a cross-section of the most important topics impacting marketing today, including the latest in buyer personas, mobile apps, social acquisition, video marketing and much more. For additional strategies and tactics, please click on the link at the bottom of each entry.

We hope these 10 tips help you enhance your marketing, deliver on the promise of engagement, and exceed your customers' expectations in 2015!

1 Think "big issues" when deciding where to focus new efforts.

"Where should I start?" With so many innovative technologies and tactics available today, deciding where to focus your marketing efforts can be overwhelming and leave you stuck maintaining the status quo. To push past this obstacle, think about the one factor that your business success rides on, and how marketing can make a difference. That's where you should direct your time, attention and resources.

Services such as A/B testing, send-time optimization, personalization, progressive

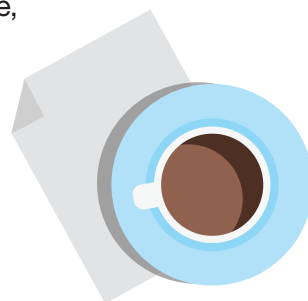
profiling, scoring, real-time content, API/partner integrations, Web tracking, dynamic content and automation can transform a so-so program into a superstar. Identify that fulcrum event in the customer relationship that drives revenue, repeat purchases, engagement and loyalty, and focus your energy and attention on the aspects that improve and support this area.

Read more: ["2015 Email Marketing Benchmark Study: Key Takeaways and Suggested Tactics"](#)

2 Identify and build out your buyer personas.

In the absence of direct buying insights, many marketers are forced to essentially "make up" marketing strategy, campaign, content and digital tactics. Developing buyer personas can help you avoid this scenario and create strategies and campaigns that truly resonate with your future buyers.

To get started, create a high-quality list of recent buyers to interview. Using select in-house team members or third-party interview experts, conduct thorough conversations with these buyers to glean their insights on how their evaluation and buying process went.



The goal should be to find out:

- Why interviewees decided to look for a new product or solution
- What brands they initially considered (and why)
- How they evaluated those brands, what was important to them and what concerned them
- What other initiatives took precedence (if they put their buying process on hold)

Once your interviews are complete, you'll be ready to organize and interpret the findings, using the insights you've gleaned to facilitate the customer journey and deliver the most relevant and compelling content.

Read more: [“Buyer Personas Is Not a Fancy Name for Segmentation”](#)

3 Leverage social to help find ideal prospects and accelerate list growth.

Social acquisition might be the premier channel for both list growth and new user acquisition in the next two to three years – especially as the pressure to monetize increases on all social sites. While most of us know what combination of elements make an ideal customer, there are many sites that have an equal view of their user base – and likely at a much larger scale.

Specifically, think about Twitter's 300 million active users and Facebook's billion-plus users. Using new tools, marketers can upload a list of known users (with as much affinity and behavior data as possible), and these social sites will run an analysis on their data and provide a list of similar prospects.

This matching of your known attributes with the hundreds of millions of social users can quickly accelerate your acquisition strategy. It's a great way to cast a wider net on affinities and only pay for as many prospects as you want to reach. Think retargeting-like precision, but on a social site where a user might be more willing to explore.

Read more: [“3 Tips for Incorporating Social into Your Overall Marketing”](#)

4 Look for new ways to collect data that will enhance your marketing.

If you want to improve your data quality, start by thinking about six pieces of information you'd like to know about each person in your database. For example, if you sell ski and snowboard equipment, valuable information might include an individual's sport preference, skill level, how often they ski or snowboard, preferred mountains/venues, brand preference for gear and if they have additional family members that join them on trips.

Once you've decided on your six questions, it's time to put a plan in place to get the answers. Here are a few options:

- Email a Survey Request
- Install a Pop-Over Window
- Use Progressive Profiling
- Trail Call Center Reps
- Collect via Point of Sale

These are just a few ideas – depending on your business, you may be able to leverage SMS, your mobile app, the prospecting process and more to get this key information into your database.

Read more: [“6 Ways to Collect the Data You Need to Enhance Your Marketing”](#)

5 Invest the time to map out your customer journey.

The customer journey includes not just every place your customer comes into contact with your company, employees and brands but also retailers, partners, review sites and more. Mapping this journey means understanding all those stages, from researching to buying to loyalty, as well as the obstacles on that path.

Once you map out this journey, you can determine the kinds of content that can get customers past typical roadblocks so they continue traveling with

your company. Ideally, you'll map the customer journey across all your company's brands and departments to reveal how often and in which channels customers are receiving messages.

Your goal is to know which messages you'll deploy at each stage of the journey. With this information you can build a campaign brief that maps out whether a single message, a series of messages in multiple channels, a specific program or track would work best, as well as the implicit and explicit data you need to determine the specific appropriate content required.

Read more: ["Mapping the Customer Journey: A New Vision for Digital Marketing"](#)

6 Think multichannel personalization.

Some marketers have made the shift to delivering individualized emails, but are still serving up the same generic content on their website, within their mobile app, via SMS and/or on social. Think about how you can start providing more personal connections between your brand and your customer on every channel.

For example, instead of treating Web visitors the same whether they're new prospects, recent first-time buyers or repeat purchasers, you could try building logic into your platform that matches Web content to where visitors are in the customer lifecycle. Examples might include:

- "Thanks for registering Vanessa – as a valued member you now have access to (LINK)"
- "Bob, looks like you haven't updated to the new version – click here for information on the release!"
- "A.J., as a 'Premium' member with 400 rewards points, we think you'll like our new Plus program."

Read more: ["4 Ways Your Marketing Team Needs to Evolve"](#)

7 Craft content that does more than just ask contacts to buy.

Your customers aren't always in the market to purchase. If all they hear from you is "buy this," can you blame them for tuning you out? To avoid this predicament, try creating content that helps your contacts solve problems, buy better, and even find interesting things they wouldn't have uncovered any other way.

Here are a few topics to talk about besides "buy this":

- **Present information** that can help your customers use your products correctly.
- **Go behind the scenes** by introducing customers to key employees. Show off your offices or factories. Talk about your company philosophy.
- **Add customer voices** to your emails by featuring reviews, endorsements, photos and other user-generated content.
- **Become the authority** in your market niche by sharing "insider" news and information.
- **Improve onboarding** for new customers with information that helps them find what they want faster or navigate better around your website.

Read more: ["Create Content That Engages Without Selling"](#)



Video: "Beyond 'Buy This': Tips for Creating Engagement Emails"

8 Double down on improving mobile app engagement.

By taking steps to improve your in-app experience, you'll be on the path to better understanding the behaviors that are manifesting themselves in the growing mobile world and using this knowledge to create a more seamless, rewarding customer experience.

To increase mobile app engagement and further integrate your app with your other marketing programs, create a drive-to-app plan that entices contacts to download your app by emphasizing what's in it for the customer. Send contacts a "download our mobile app" email invitation and add a similar message to your onboarding program.

If the idea of creating all-new content for a mobile app seems daunting, look to mine your existing channels for content you could repurpose. Then tweak it to take advantage of an app's unique capabilities while being mindful of mobile context.

Finally, make sure your app doesn't exist in its own silo. Feed all those app behaviors you're capturing into a central marketing database, where you can use them to trigger personalized content and interactions across your emails, website, call centers and more.

Read more: ["Mobile Apps 2.0: Keys to Improving the Customer Experience"](#)

9 Incorporate more video into your marketing mix.

Reading isn't everyone's preferred method for consuming content. By including informative videos in your digital marketing strategy, such as thought-leadership content or compelling customer stories, you're putting a human face on your business and engaging customers who are pressed for time.

What's more, now is an ideal time to start integrating more video into your marketing efforts. Faster connection speeds and cheaper data plans have helped drive increased video consumption, especially via social and mobile platforms. Plus, it's become simpler for companies to produce video, with mobile evolving to the point that smartphones

can capture video that approximates or matches video-camera quality. Even if longer-form YouTube video seems too difficult to pull off, at least consider shorter-form tools like Periscope or Instagram video to add another layer of dimension to your social presence.

Integrating more video into your customer journey communications strategy can increase customer satisfaction and move prospects closer to purchasing. So, examine the typical customer journey and look for opportunities to leverage video content. At what points in the journey can video effectively create interest, solve buyer problems or drive brand preference and engagement?

Read more: ["5 Digital Marketing Predictions"](#)

10 Add value to your transactional emails.

The average transactional email drives twice the opens of an average nontransactional message, yet many marketers miss the opportunity to take advantage of this engagement to provide value and build deeper connections. If your transactional emails are currently limited to purchase information, consider expanding them to include educational content that increases customer satisfaction.

For example, hotels and airlines often provide weather forecasts, "Things to do in Chicago," TSA tips and more in their confirmation emails to help patrons make the most of their travel. You might not be selling luxury accommodations or plush destinations, but links to beginner's guides, demo videos, FAQs or a user forum can help enhance the buyer experience.

Read more: ["Building the Optimal Transactional Email \(Infographic\)"](#)

Yep, there's a lot changing in digital marketing today, but remember: Today's disruption is tomorrow's opportunity. These 10 tips should help you take better advantage of some of today's exciting opportunities, but there's a lot more to consider. To that end, please continue checking [our blog](#) and ["Resources" hub](#) to stay on top of the latest trends and tactics in 2016.

Silverpop, an IBM Company, is a cloud-based digital marketing provider that offers email marketing, lead-to-revenue management and mobile engagement solutions. Silverpop Engage — the foundation of the IBM Marketing Cloud — uses customer data and individual behaviors, collected from a variety of sources, to inform and drive personalized interactions in real time. IBM Marketing Cloud powers the delivery of exceptional experiences for customers across the buyer journey by leveraging key data, providing analytical insights and automating relevant cross-channel interactions.

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