

Integrated Marketing: The Path to Smarter Spending



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Intro

During the dawn of the marketing era—a time characterized by billboard campaigns, print advertisements, radio spotlights and product brochures—marketers had little choice but to throw strategies against the wall and try to figure out what stuck. That's because prior to the advent of websites, blogs, video and social media, it was often difficult to determine whether your next loyal customer came to you as a result of your riveting billboard or because of that captivating advertisement in a magazine.

Fast forward to today, however, and marketers have a myriad of metrics and analytics they can comb through and a variety of avant-garde content marketing strategies they can employ. And, as a result, they no longer have to shoot blindly at the dart board; rather they can partake in competitive analysis and market research to determine which communications vehicles are right for them.

Putting Your Eggs in Several Baskets

While marketers of the past traditionally forked over large sums of money for specific campaigns (think magazine advertisements for Q1; a routine radio spotlight for Q2; revamped marketing brochures for Q3; and TV advertisements for Q4), today's marketers can utilize several strategies at once, since the barrier to entry for content marketing has been reduced. This tactic is described as integrated marketing.

Simply put, integrated marketing refers to relying on multiple communications platforms and mediums to disseminate a consistent brand identity to hone your corporate image. In other words, it means that instead of putting all your eggs in one basket, you leverage multiple platforms that work cohesively to spread the message about your brand. In so doing, you empower your customers to turn to the platform with which they are most comfortable.

In fact, companies that implement and execute integrated marketing tactics will achieve a 50 percent higher return on marketing investment, according to Gartner. Moreover, marketing organizations that utilize inbound and event-triggered integrated marketing techniques will see a 600 percent higher response rate compared to traditional outbound campaigns.

The Benefits of Integrated Marketing

There is no disputing the advantages made possible by integrated marketing, namely the fact that you

are taking important steps toward making sure your branding and messaging are consistent and powerful across all marketing campaigns. This means that every time your customer interacts with one of your touch points—whether through social media, blogging or webinars—your brand identity is reinforced, which builds greater awareness about your company over time.

Moreover, integrated marketing allows you to spend smarter. Rather than investing all your valuable marketing dollars in one avenue, you are putting your money in a few different campaigns, exploring several different channels and maximizing their impact and the return on that investment.

With benefits like these on the table, it comes as no surprise that by 2014, more than 40 percent of large complex marketing organizations will have developed a pace-layered application approach to integrated marketing.

Where Do I Start?

Once you realize the power of integrated marketing, your next step is to determine which communications channels are right for you. While the marketing world is brimming with new techniques—from blogging to infographics to podcasts—that does not mean that you should jump head first into each and every tactic. Conversely, determine what consistent marketing message you want to spread, figure out where your target audience is and decide which platforms make sense for your core market.

Your integrated marketing campaign should be well thought out and, above all else, should result in augmented brand awareness, happy customers and tangible profitability. Perhaps for you that means marrying a social media campaign with a blogging initiative. Or maybe it means pairing a comprehensive white paper with a compelling infographic. No matter the vehicles you employ remember the following:

Stellar Strategy + Appropriate Marketing Channels = Happy Customers and ROI

In the following pages, we will do a deep dive into some of the most promising integrated marketing strategies—including blogging, social media, white papers, webinars, infographics and email marketing—and explore how each can be used separately or in conjunction to yield the greatest return on marketing investment.

Growing Your Base with Blogging

As a content marketing novice, we know what you're thinking: Where do I start? While developing a comprehensive integrated marketing strategy can seem intimidating, it's actually quite simple.

Think of your company's blog as the backbone of your integrated marketing strategy— a place where customers can connect with your brand, learn about exciting news and gain industry insight. Your company has a story to tell, and your customers are waiting to hear it. In fact, 68 percent of consumers are likely to spend time reading content from a brand they are interested in and 70 percent of consumers say content marketing makes them feel closer to the sponsoring company.

Blogs are an imperative marketing tool for boosting brand awareness, establishing thought leadership, generating leads and driving web traffic. For example, 37 percent of marketers say blogs are the most valuable type of content marketing and that company blogs are viewed as the “most useful” form of content. Moreover, B2B companies that blog generate 67 percent more leads per month than those that don't blog, and 60 percent of consumers feel more positive about a company after reading custom content on its site.

So How Do I Begin?

Odds are that you already have a good handle on your audience and target market. To begin, put yourself in their shoes; for instance, if you were a customer what would you want to know? Developing custom, captivating content that's relevant to your readers will keep them coming back for more. Specifically, 82 percent of consumers like reading content from brands when it's relevant and 70 percent of consumers prefer getting to know a company via articles rather than ads.

For example, if you're a healthcare specialist, why not blog about the top three ways to fight the flu or how the new Affordable Healthcare Act will affect patients in the near future. Or, if you are a retailer, give your customers exclusive insight into next season's trends or a behind-the-scenes look into your next photo shoot.

When you create the kind of tailored copy your customers are looking for—that which is specifically of interest to them—you not only showcase what you have to offer but you also attract and convert prospects.

Research shows that INC 500 companies are more apt to have a blog than Fortune 500 companies, which evidences the growing trend of enterprise blogs. This type of content has quickly become one of the largest puzzle pieces in your integrated marketing platform, as it allows you to differentiate yourself and produce thought-provoking content that yields engagement.

Keeping it Fresh

One of the cardinal sins of blogging is inconsistency. Neglecting your company's blog can oftentimes be more disastrous than not having a blog at all. For potential customers, there's nothing more disappointing than sifting through a company's blog and seeing that the last post was created January 2010. A majority of your competitors who have blogs—65 percent of them—only update them once a month because they don't have time. You're better than that.

**Think of your company's
blog as the backbone of
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strategy!**

By keeping your blog fresh with new content, you not only increase your chances of being indexed in Google, but you also drive traffic to your site. Companies that integrate blogging into their marketing strategy will generate 55 percent more website visitors than companies that do not adopt this tactic. Furthermore, businesses that have 52 or more blogs indexed experience traffic generation increases of 77 percent.

Bring it to the Social World

Once you've hit “publish,” your job isn't over. One of the many benefits of deploying an integrated marketing strategy is the ability to access customers from several different platforms. Complement your blogging platform with an extensive social media campaign, sharing your blog on Facebook and Twitter or featuring your newest post in your next eNewsletter. Not only will this drive more traffic to your site from your existing base, but it will also encourage potential customers to visit your site as well.

Dipping Your Toe in the Social Pool

There's no denying that social media has become an ingrained part of our everyday lives.

After all, Facebook claims 1.15 billion monthly users; Google+, just two years old, is the second most popular social networking site with 359 million active users; Twitter boasts more 250 million tweets each day; and, in just over three years, Pinterest has attracted 70 million users who spend on average 14.2 minutes browsing the site each visit.

Any way you slice it, that's a lot of people and a lot of voices. Since these people are logged in to their social media accounts daily—browsing their friends' statuses, reading the latest tweets or pinning items—they're actively engaged. They're paying attention.

175 percent of companies reported they're increasing the frequency of their webinars.1

What does this mean for you as a marketer? That social media needs to be a vital part of your integrated marketing strategy. These users are the most desirous group of people and, more importantly, they're a captive audience.

Finding Your Platform

Before diving into the social world, there's still the matter of finding which platform your target audience frequents the most. If you're looking to target women, for example, you might choose to heavily invest your efforts on Pinterest, as females make up 68.2 percent of all users. If you're looking to target business customers, you'd likely choose to go after LinkedIn subscribers.

Directing your marketing efforts toward those in your target audience will certainly result in success. And with a vocal, engaged audience, marketers have the ability to have powerful campaigns spread virally in the matter of hours. Consider social media marketing to be a virtualized—and enhanced—ver-

sion of word of mouth marketing. According to Forrester Research, 500 billion brand impressions are made each year via word of mouth. Social media is even more powerful than word of mouth because it has the ability to instantly link strangers who live in disparate locations.

If your company's yet to implement a social media marketing strategy, there's no other way to say it: You've fallen behind, and you'll be playing catch up until you do.

And here's why:

- Nearly two-thirds of all businesses are taking advantage of social media marketing.
- Marketers find customers via social networking: 52 percent have found a customer on Facebook in 2013; 43 percent have found a customer on LinkedIn; and 36 percent have found a customer on Twitter.
- Nearly half of those who use the Internet rely on social media while deciding whether to buy a product.
- By a 3-to-1 majority, B2B buyers said social media will affect their future purchases.
- Compared to the average Internet user, Twitter users—by a 59 to 40 percent margin—are more likely to visit B2B tech websites should they see tweets from those companies.

Simply put, social media gives marketers another avenue through which to drive sales and capture the attention of new customers. Marketers are able to create awareness of their products and establish themselves as thought leaders who stand out amongst a sea of competitors. The use of social media allows marketers to gain the trust of their audience while continuing to build that audience so an even more diverse and expansive number of eyeballs see the message.

Take the Plunge

If you've not yet taken the plunge into the world of social media as part of your integrated marketing strategy, all hope is not yet lost. More than 40 percent of companies admit they don't have a strategy in place for converting social media marketing into lead generation. And, despite the proven benefits, 33 percent of companies aren't still unsure of the value social media.

Remember, it's more important to have less social media accounts and run them more thoroughly than have many accounts that you rarely update. If you're struggling to figure out which social media platforms would be most beneficial to your business, consider analyzing your competitors' social media presences to see where they have the most fans and the most interactivity and begin there.

If you've not yet taken the next step into a modern integrated marketing strategy by joining the world of social media, it's not too late. But as businesses increasingly shift their attention toward social networks, it's becoming more and more imperative that you do too.

Driving Leads with White Paper Creation

Now that you've settled on deploying an integrated marketing strategy, it's time to evaluate what channel best fits your needs. While almost every business can benefit from blogging, social media, email marketing and infographics, white papers are proven most effective for B2B companies that span the different verticals from financial to technology to healthcare to education.

On average, B2B marketers utilize eight different content marketing tactics to reach their goals, one of which is the use of white papers. In fact, 51 percent of B2B companies rely on this integrated marketing tactic.

Creating and distributing white papers offers a number of advantages for your company, among them establishing thought leadership and credibility and generating leads. According to Frost and Sullivan, publications are viewed as one of the most important sources for valuing a company and its products.

When used as a part of your integrated marketing strategy, white papers can quickly generate leads as they are persuasive by nature. For example, 85 percent of B2B decision makers and 82 percent of influencers find white papers to be moderately-to-extremely influential in their purchasing decisions.

Are you launching a new product or service? Or expanding your core competencies? White papers are a great way to promote new solutions and drive sales. However, heavy self-promotion and scattered ideas and information won't get you anywhere.

Solve a Problem

Chances are you've developed a solution or service that solves a problem or fills a specific need. Your

white paper should do the same. Specifically, 73.8 percent of consumers use white papers to investigate possible technology solutions for their business/technology needs. Therefore, it is imperative to find out what's plaguing your customers, and then develop an authoritative white paper backed by well-documented research, rich statistics and expert advice to address that concern.

When finished, your customers will feel confident that your solution or service can help solve their problem. Not only will this help establish your brand as a thought leader and expert in your respective industry, but it will also show customers that you have a clear understanding of their needs.

You can't expect your customers to just take your word for it; instead, you have to show them that your solutions do indeed yield proven results. White papers are a great place to include case studies—where you can show, not tell, your customers how your product or service has helped others like them solve a problem with real results.

Promote It

Now that you've created a white paper packed with data and valuable information, spread the word about it through the marketing channels you already employ. Feature your white papers in your eNewsletters; mention them on social media; and spotlight them on your blogging platform. Not only will these strategies bring new eyeballs to your white paper, but if your asset is properly gated—meaning people can't access it unless they fill out required fields of information—then you can receive countless promising leads as a result of your efforts.

Your white paper is a perfect place to demonstrate your subject matter expertise and hone your corporate identity in a lengthier marketing piece. Figure out a way to weave a white paper strategy into your integrated marketing campaign.

Unlocking a World of Engagement with Webinars

In the world of marketing, there's no such thing as too much quality content. With this in mind, forward-thinking marketers should consider adding webinars to their integrated marketing strategy.

Used by 95 percent of companies recently surveyed, webinars provide marketers with yet another avenue through which to relay important information to their audience. They help you interact with your target market in real-time—thanks to live chat features and

real-time Q&A sessions—while generating leads and ultimately converting those leads into new customers. Because of that, 75 percent of companies reported they're increasing the frequency of their webinars.

Launching Your Campaign

First and foremost, webinars aren't explicitly tied to making a sale or generating revenue. They're about providing your audience with knowledge, oftentimes free of charge. Should a member of your target audience be unable to attend a webinar when it's initially being offered, that's no problem: Webinars can be recorded and archived, meaning whoever visits your website can access that information at any given time. When you provide meaningful content free of charge, people take notice. They become engaged with you and your company.

While you're not explicitly pushing your products and services during webinars, you're still marketing to your customers, perhaps more subtly. And the return on investment is measurable:

- Inspired Marketing reported the 300 webinars they presented in 2010 led to at least \$2.5 million in sales in 2011.
- LUMEDX, a small healthcare company, hosted webinars to stand out from its competition. Those webinars led to \$600,000 in annual sales.
- Pinpointe, a company that provides email marketing automation services, added webinars to its integrated marketing mix and generated 1,000 additional leads to month. That translated to \$75,000.
- Seagate, a large technology company, wanted to market directly to consumers. It added webinars and exceeded 300 percent of its initial sales goal.

Webinars allow your company to share what you know best, that which makes your proverbial clock tick. Whether you want to discuss industry trends, case studies, product demos or share original research is up to you. But consider your target audience before choosing the topic you wish to cover. Attending webinars is extremely easy for those who are interested. All they need is a computer or tablet, an Internet connection and some free time.

The Tangible and Intangible Webinar Benefits

When added to your integrated marketing strategy, webinars provide a host of benefits including:

- **Lead generation:** You don't devote your time listening to someone from whom you don't think you can learn. So if someone signs up for a webinar you're running, they have respect for you and consider you to be a worthy authority on the issue about which you're going to be talking. Since you know the interest is already there from the start, you can use that information to convert that person into a customer.
- **Engagement:** Webinars open up the ability to interact with those who are registered in real time. Participants are already engaged to begin with, but when you open up the floor for a question-and-answer session, you can interact with them instantly, answering their questions immediately and directly, which makes them feel valued.

[There are roughly 450 percent more actions performed by individuals reading infographics than by those reading traditional posts.]

- **User-friendly:** A webinar can be accessed from anywhere—a home, an office, a coffee shop, an airport, a hotel room... the list goes on. Participants don't have to spend money on travel or other accommodations.

When companies announced a new product in the past, they would simply issue a press release and place some ads in newspapers or magazines and be done with it. But thanks to the Internet, it doesn't have to stop there. With webinars as part of your integrated marketing strategy, you can dive deep into a session focused on your new product and its benefits and features.

Marketers shouldn't look at a webinar as a one-time event. In addition to the fact that they're recorded and can be accessed whenever someone wants, you can also blog about them, mention them on social media, expand the topic in a white paper and promote them in email marketing blasts. For these reasons, webinars are a vital tool marketers can take advantage of when implementing their integrated marketing strategy.

Telling a Story with Infographics

Successful marketing is no longer solely about text and written copy. Conversely, as your target audi-

ence becomes more and more visual, your marketing efforts need to morph as well. One such way to do that is by constructing informative infographics and adding them to your integrated marketing strategy.

In this day and age of our truncated attention spans—the average human attention span was eight seconds in 2012, down from 12 seconds in 2000—it's more important than ever to tell stories as concisely as possible, maximizing the transmission of data by presenting it in a clear and easy-to-digest manner.

[pull quote: There are roughly 450 percent more actions performed by individuals reading infographics than by those reading traditional posts]

When done properly, infographics tell stories through graphics and capture the attention of the viewer, transmitting data and knowledge in an understandable manner. Rather than reading a block of text, consumers are able to learn something quickly by digesting both visuals and key bullet points.

The Power of the Infographic

So why are we attracted to infographics? Because each day, we're exposed to five times as much information as we were 25 years ago, a number that amounts to more than 100,000 words of information, not including what we're exposed to during work. And because we're visually wired creatures:

- Half of our brains are involved in visual processing.
- 70 percent of our sensory receptors are in our eyes.
- We can process scenes in less than one-tenth of one second.
- The existence of color increases our willingness to read something by 80 percent.
- We remember 10 percent of what we hear, 20 percent of what we read and 80 percent of what we see and do.

Infographics allow companies to emerge as experts and thought leaders in their respective fields by showing—not telling. They demonstrate to your audience that you have a well of information that you wish to share widely and freely. Including infographics in your integrated marketing strategy also helps build brand awareness, as new customers are exposed to and educated by your creation. This

encourages them to dig a little deeper and find out more about your company and what you do. And that in turn increases traffic to your website, blog and social media channels.

Because we are visual by nature, should we find an infographic interesting, there is a promising likelihood we will share it with our friends via social networks. When compared to a traditional post, infographics receive:

- 578 retweets, compared to 62
- Nine Google +1s, compared to four
- 51 shares on LinkedIn, compared to seven
- 330 pageviews on StumbleUpon, compared to 39

In other words, there are roughly 450 percent more actions performed by individuals reading infographics than by those reading traditional posts.

Simply put, these visuals are easy to understand and easy to share. When added to your integrated marketing strategy, they can become powerful tools that help convey complicated information in a matter of minutes.

Best Practices for Infographic Creation

Infographics lend themselves to being able to represent a variety of different things—statistics, concepts, models, resources, specs, timelines and other information. So choosing which kind of variety best benefits your company, its mission and its integrated marketing strategy is important.

Here are five tips to consider when figuring out what to share in an infographic:

1. Don't be me-centric: The fact of the matter is that no one is really interested in hearing about you. Instead, they are more excited about hearing your ideas and learning something new.
2. Be original: In order to be taken seriously as a thought leader, you need to provide your audience with new information. Compile that information from a variety of sources, adding your own insights and conclusions in the process.
3. Consider your audience: You might create a compelling infographic, but if it is not in the interest of your target audience, you missed the mark. Think about your target audience, think about what they're interested in and cater to those specific needs.

4. Pay attention to design: Create something visually appealing. That means the artwork, the font, the structure—everything. Make sure it's aesthetically pleasing and easy on the eyes.

5. Consider the point: Your idea can't be too complex, but it shouldn't be too superficial, either. Make sure you're able to get your point across relatively quickly.

Infographics are vital to a well-balanced integrated marketing strategy. While they don't necessarily have to anchor each and every campaign, well-executed ones have the ability to be shared liberally, creating a buzz for your brand while establishing it as a thought leader.

The Rise of Email Marketing

Do you have a stellar blog or list of industry white papers to promote? Then don't write-off email marketing as an outdated marketing strategy just yet. There's a reason why this "traditional" marketing strategy has stood the test of time.

Email marketing is an effective tactic for generating leads and sales, driving web traffic, evaluating where prospects fall in the customer lifecycle and maximizing customer lifetime value. According to market research, 51 percent of B2Bs state that email marketing is the most successful tool in generating leads. This year alone, 56 percent of businesses plan to increase their use of email marketing and for good reason. For every dollar spent, the average return on email marketing investment is \$44.25.

Marketers are constantly trying to find ways to reach their customers and what better way is there to communicate with them than through the most widely used online channel.

It's Email Marketing, Not Spam Marketing

Simply pressing "send" for the sake of sending an email with no strategy in place will not get you any closer to your goals. Once you have established a working customer base, the next—and arguably most important—step is creating interesting, relevant custom content, which you probably already have on your company blog or in white papers. Upon opening the email, your readers should be able to answer these three questions: What is the email about? Why should I care? And what should I do about it?

With 69 percent of email recipients reporting email as spam based solely on the subject line, the importance of creating attention-grabbing subject lines is imperative.

Subject lines should include some type of call-to-action, sense of urgency and taste of what readers

can expect once they open the email. It's important to keep the main message and any call-to-actions above the fold as 70 percent of recipients won't see the call-to-action placed below the fold. Moreover, keep it short and sweet. Subject lines with fewer than 10 characters have an open rate of 58 percent and 64 percent of email recipients open an email based on the subject line alone. For B2B companies, subject lines that contained the words "money," "revenue," and "profit" performed the best, while personalized subject lines are 22.2 percent more likely to be opened and subject lines that include incentives can increase open rates by as much as 50 percent.

Getting Noticed

Getting customers to open an email is just half the battle. Now that you have your customers' attention, what's next?

Odds are that your customers receive hundreds of emails a day. That being said, don't bombard your customers with irrelevant content that will end up in their spam bucket. This is the perfect opportunity to promote a company white paper or drive traffic to your company blog.

In fact, 61 percent of customers are more likely to purchase goods from businesses that offer custom content. And 70 percent of customers who read emails from companies do so for some sort of deal; 53 percent do so to learn about new products; and 41 percent want news and updates from the company.

Whether you're launching a new event, releasing a new product or just wanting to share your best industry tips and tricks with your customers, sharing compelling custom information is the key to engaging with your customers. Keep in mind that 72 percent of B2B buyers are most likely to share useful content via email, so make it count.

What Now?

Now that you've got your customers hooked and interested in what you have to say, give them an opportunity to explore, connect and share with you beyond just the email.

Landing pages should provide a seamless experience and match closely to the email in terms of headline, copy and content. Keep the conversations going on social media by including icons that link to your company's online social media pages. Emails that include social sharing buttons have a 158 percent higher click through rate.

Don't underestimate the power of email marketing as it's an effective marketing tool and one of the easiest ways to get your brand in front of potential customers. And the great thing about this strategy is that it takes place on the customer's own time.

Your Integrated Marketing Journey Begins Now

When it comes to your integrated marketing campaign, the sky is really the limit. Your job as a marketer is to sift through all of the different types of strategies and tactics to figure out what makes the most sense for your business and core audience. And, most importantly, learn from the past. After all, we are no longer operating with blinders. Conversely, we can do the appropriate research, spend ample time planning and analyzing metrics and come up with solid, well-defined marketing strategies.

Keep in mind that integrated marketing is not a one-size fits all solution. Just because a well-respected business colleague has brought social media, white papers and infographics to his business does not mean that your company should necessarily head down those allies as well. Rather, do your competitive analysis, weed through relevant market research and identify which tactics make sense to throw at the wall.

Your integrated marketing journey can begin right now. Pull out a new piece of paper, turn on the computer and head down the path to smarter spending.

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