

Marketing 101:

## **Marketing for Maximum Success**

What every Small Business Owner needs  
to know about building an online presence

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# Marketing Strategy: Don't Paint Yourself in a Corner, Create a Marketing Masterpiece



You love the quick win. You look for new opportunities and new ways to grow and improve. That's because you're a competitor, and you wouldn't be a successful small business leader if you weren't. Unfortunately, the same competitiveness that drives your success...can also thwart it.

To demonstrate how your competitive nature can actually reduce your odds for maximum

success, let's consider the common experience of painting a room. We have all experienced the "Oh wow!" That's our natural response when we see a space transformed by a fresh coat of paint, especially if the painting project was executed with precision and style: just the right color...nice clean lines...an accent shade or two...and suddenly drab becomes fab.

It is natural when you paint to want to jump right in with the roller, making the biggest immediate "splash" you can. But those paint projects don't end up dazzling. They're sloppy and ineffective and don't last. All because the painter didn't take time for key preparation: choosing the right type of paint for the room's use; accounting for room's sunlight; thoroughly prepping the surfaces; buying quality brushes and paint, and applying patience and a steady hand.

Don't fall victim to the same result with your marketing strategy. DON'T jump immediately into tactics, such as advertising, internet marketing, email, social media marketing, before you have done your preparation. This instruction guide will provide you with some of basics, key steps in marketing preparation that will help you execute for maximum success.

# Unique Value Proposition

Before you open the doors of your small business, ideally you should have determined what makes your company different, and better, than the competition. This is called your company's unique value proposition or UVP. A UVP is a concise description of what makes your business special and often is incorporated into your tagline.

FedEx's longtime UVP is "When it absolutely positively has to be there overnight." If a customer values reliability and quick delivery, FedEx is the way to ship. A few years back, FedEx was the only shipping company that offered overnight delivery. Now, other companies offer the same overnight shipping service, but FedEx remains the industry leader partly because they have successfully marketed their UVP.

Walmart recently changed its UVP in an attempt to reposition itself in the market. Clearly the leader in low cost retail, Walmart is now trying to be perceived as a gateway to better living through the UVP: "Save money. Live better."

As a small business owner, you must scan the competitive landscape, size up your strengths, and determine what values your business stands for. If you offer high quality customer service, you probably don't have the lowest prices. If you offer a do-it-yourself customer environment, you probably aren't offering personalized service.

To develop your business' UVP, it is important to start with the benefit your product or service is going to provide. Is the benefit different than your competition? Why do customers initially come to you? Typically there is a pain point that a prospective customer is experiencing and your company provides a solution to ease this pain. How does your company ease this pain point better than your competition?



There are many components that can determine a UVP, following are a few to consider as you create or recreate yours:

- Pricing
- Service
- Quality
- Experience
- Youth
- Talent
- Tenure

An effective exercise to help you determine your UVP is listing adjectives that describe your business. You can also talk to your current customers and determine what they value most about your business. Narrow that down to two to three descriptors. Make sure the words summarize your business and are unique to your industry. That should provide a solid basis to craft your UVP.

Your UVP should be effectively communicated in all marketing communications to be successful. This includes your website, marketing collateral, sales interaction, etc. There should never be a mystery regarding what your business stands for and what you offer that makes your business special.

# Ideal Customer Profile



I meet with many entrepreneurs and when I ask them who their customer is, a typical response is “everyone!” Unfortunately, this thinking is misguided since it violates a primary rule of marketing: You can’t be everything to everyone. Chasing this faulty premise can leave you with less money and more frustration.

When entrepreneurs begin to think about designing their company’s logo, marketing collateral, and/or website, they need to start by identifying their ideal customer profile or ICP. Unless you happen to sell the

air we all breathe, “everyone” is not an ideal customer. For marketing communications to be effective and compelling, the messaging must be developed with a specific customer in mind.

You can use demographic targeting to help identify and narrow down your ICP. That can be age, gender, income, urban/suburban, etc. You can also use behavioral targeting: What websites do my ideal customers frequent? How often do they go out to dinner? Do they shop online? And another excellent method is to analyze your current top-tier customers. Profiling these “A” customers will probably provide a good indication of who you should target as “A” prospects.

Typically businesses have two to three customer segments that represent approximately 90% of their business, so it is crucial that your business marketing resonates with each segment.

## Following are components to address when creating your ICP:

- Industry type
- Number of employees
- Geography
- Revenue
- Contact person who brought you in
- How you initially engaged communication
- Pain points

# Establish a Strong Marketing Foundation

After you have determined your UVP and ICP, next you should set the proper marketing foundation: a corporate identity and brand.



## Corporate Identity

As you develop a plan for your company to gain visibility, develop new clients and generate revenue, a vital early step is establishing a corporate identity, and one way your corporate identity will be expressed is through your logo.

Almost every business has a logo, but is your logo professional, versatile and timeless? More importantly, is your logo being supported by consistent use across all avenues? Your logo and

its consistent use across marketing communication materials helps solidify your corporate identity. When put into action properly it creates a strong visual identity for your company that allows clients and prospects to identify with and relate to your company.

A logo can conjure emotions and preconceived opinions about a particular product. For instance, a laptop with an Apple logo typically generates a specific reaction from a consumer. Because this product is associated with Apple (linked by its logo), a customer may think it's of higher quality, more reliable or a more innovative product than competing products. A logo paired with a well-executed brand strategy will help create this strong corporate identity.

# Brand Positioning and Promise



Many people think about branding and focus on the design elements instead of brand strategy. Two major elements of branding strategy are brand positioning and the brand promise. As a small business owner, it is critical you focus on both.

With brand positioning, you try to create a perception among your target market of the market position for your product or service. For instance, BMW is positioned as the “ultimate driving machine.” TRESemme is positioned as “professional, affordable.” Usually a product or service is positioned by qualities like cost, quality, or target market. The brand position needs to be consistent throughout your marketing efforts and reflected in your images, messaging and tactics or customers will be confused.

The next element of branding is the brand promise, which is related to brand positioning. The brand promise addresses customers’ expectations about a product or service. For instance, WalMart’s brand positioning as the “low cost leader” creates an implied promise to customers that they can trust WalMart has the lowest price for a product. Chances are, customers will not expect Nordstrom type

service when shopping at WalMart—that is not an aspect of their brand promise. The brand promise is the execution of the brand position.

Sometimes brand positioning and its execution are misaligned. An example of this is Kaiser Permanente. Over the past few years, Kaiser’s brand campaign has promoted positioning as a high-end healthcare provider focused on wellness. Targeting affluent customers, the campaign is summed up with the tagline, “Live Well and Thrive.” Now I grew up with Kaiser insurance and as one of my doctors put it, “Kaiser is a great healthcare plan for healthy people.” It was a healthcare plan that served as a cost-effective solution for my parents, who were raising five children. I never thought of Kaiser as a “country club” health plan. If I was a marketer of Kaiser, I would be concerned about customers having unrealistic expectations about the brand and ultimately being disappointed by Kaiser’s “non-country club” service delivery. If its brand promise falls short, customers will not be happy.

As a small business, think about how you want to be viewed by customers and deliver on your brand promise. By positioning your brand effectively, there will be no mystery among your target customers regarding what you stand for. If you deliver on your brand promise, you will achieve long-term customer satisfaction.

The corporate identity, brand position and promise establish the foundation for all marketing communications. Most marketing communications take the form of a marketing tactic. Next we will discuss various tactics to choose from so you can determine a tactical plan that works for your small business.

## Website

# It's a Web-Based World, and It's Affordable

For most small businesses, traditional marketing tactics such as broadcast and print advertising are cost-prohibitive. Traditional marketing tactics are often an inefficient way to allocate marketing dollars. A small business is lucky if a broadcast audience consists of 2% of its target audience. If you offer a specialized service, you can be allocating marketing funds to a tactic for which 98% of the audience has no need for your product. With new media marketing, such as web and social media, you can target your specific customers without breaking the bank. If the tactic is properly selected, it is very possible that over 75% of the audience you target will be your ideal customer. You want to reach these ideal customers at the precise time they may be interested in your product or service.



## Website

As a small business, your website will serve as the centerpiece of your marketing efforts. It will be a resource for prospective clients and will establish credibility with your target market. If your website truly acts as a resource center, ideal prospects will visit the website and sign up for timely information. Offering resources such as white papers and webinars to website visitors is an excellent way to capture prospective client information.



# SEO: Search Engine Optimization

Once you have built a compelling website that establishes your credibility by being a resource center for prospects, you must make sure your website shows up prominently on search engines. Google, Yahoo! and Bing are the top three search engines that together have 99% market share of the search engine market. Search engine optimization, commonly referred to as SEO, is the application of specific tactics to increase your site's ranking on search engines. A search engine like Google ranks websites for certain keywords based on website attributes. The search engine factors change continuously so you must make sure you hire a search engine specialist to ensure your website ranks high for targeted keywords in the top search engines.

Working back to the needs of your customers or the benefits you provide, think about keywords an ideal customer will type into a search engine looking for the services and/or products you provide. If you can target the proper keywords, your ideal customer will find your website on

the proper search engine results. You also want to consider the amount of existing competition and traffic there is for these keywords when finalizing your keyword list.

## On-page optimization

As you create your SEO strategy, you will want to focus on your front end website content as well as back-end coding, both of which contribute to on-page optimization. Typically a small business will need a web developer and SEO expert working in tandem to help with on-page optimization. Examples of on-page optimization include optimizing the actual HTML code, meta tags, keyword placement and keyword density.

Optimizing the back end of the website will help a search engine "crawl" your website easily and determine what the website is about. Meta tags provide information about a given web page to help search engines categorize it correctly and they are not visible to a website visitor. Meta data has less effect on search engine results pages today than they did in the 1990s and their utility has decreased dramatically as search engines have become more sophisticated. However, it is still necessary to include on your website. There are many other website optimization techniques that your SEO expert and web developer can employ to help search engines spider your website. Following are just a few other website optimization strategies to be considered to help boost SEO: alt tags, anchor link text, deep linking, page load time, search engine sitemaps, 404 error pages.



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## SEO (continued)



Keyword placement focuses on strategically placing the keywords you are targeting on both the front end and back end of each web page. First, you should start with the help of a professional who can provide a keyword analysis to determine the keywords web searchers are searching for. From there, it is important to “seed” the right keywords in the key places within your website. The right keywords need to be placed in the page titles, url, meta data, header and subheader tags. An SEO expert can help you determine optimal keyword placement.

The actual web page body copy is also very important. You must integrate your targeted keywords in the web copy and the copy must be consistent with the title and header tags. You want to make sure that targeted keywords are placed towards the top of the web page

and used throughout the web page. This will help increase your website’s keyword density. Keyword density is the percentage of times a keyword or phrase appears on a web page compared to the total number of words on the page. Make sure to not overuse keywords though. The overuse of keywords, a practice called keyword stuffing, will cause a web page to be penalized.

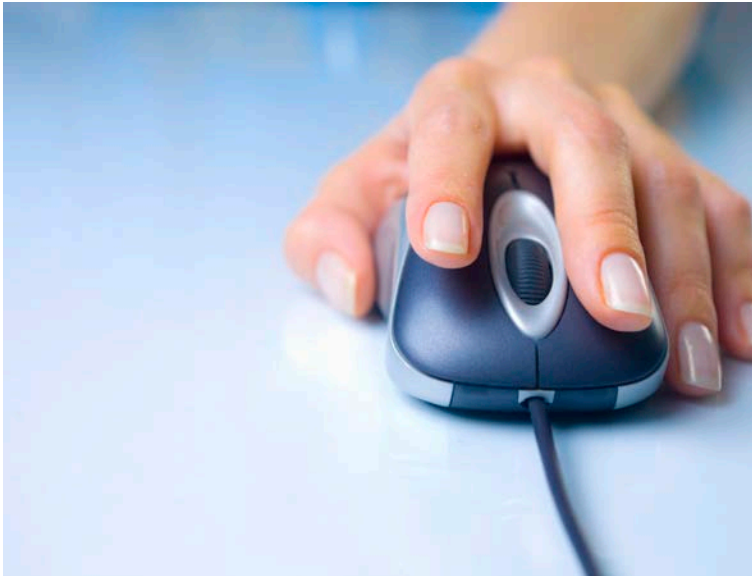
### Off-page optimization

Off-page optimization tactics that focus on successful SEO practices off of your website can be just as important as on-page optimization. If you’re creating useful, compelling content on your website, other sites will want to link to you. You want to approach popular websites that target your ideal customer and ask if they will link to you. Linking to relevant, popular websites will help you rise in the rankings.

When another website has a link to your website, make sure that the text itself in the link (called anchor text) includes the keywords you want to target. For instance, don’t use your company name as anchor text: instead of Bop Design, a more effective link would use targeted keywords like San Diego web design.

Website

## Pay-Per-Click (PPC)



SEO requires time and patience, and it typically requires three to four months to see tangible results. As you ramp up SEO, PPC marketing is an effective method to generate immediate lead generation from your website. PPC is a method of online advertising where you only pay for advertising that is displayed or if your actual ad is clicked on. The PPC ad can be a text ad or a banner ad and are typically displayed on a website, in search engine results, or on social media platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn.

Of course, your ads should include compelling messages that prompt prospective customers to click them and then directs the prospects to your website. The ads should direct the visitors to a landing page, specific to the product or service being advertised. In general, a PPC ad should not be directing to your firm's home page. Your home page really acts as "everything to everybody." A PPC ad clicker who is directed to the home page has to then find what they're searching for. This extra work may be too time consuming. PPC ads work best when the clicker is directed to a landing page highlighting a specific product or service. This landing page consists of a call to action, prompting the visitor to engage with your firm.

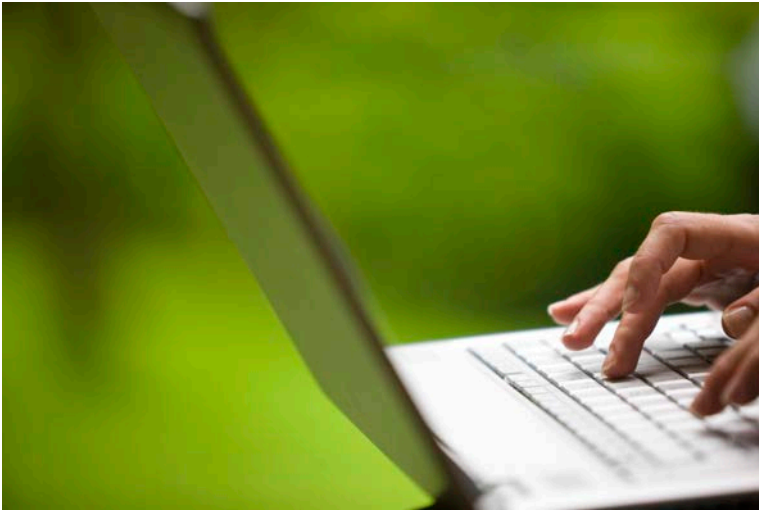
# Online PR: Blogging, Social Media, Thought Leadership



As a start-up business, paying for PR services can be cost-prohibitive. In general, a good PR agency will start at \$2k a month. Many people think of PR as “free advertising” but it really requires time and effort to position your business as a thought leader. When you hire a PR agency, you are paying for the relationships that this firm has fostered over many years. PR agencies can give you access to business journal writers, quotes in articles related to your industry, publicity for new client accounts, etc. Once you start generating enough revenue, we strongly encourage all of our clients to hire a PR agency that will provide access to traditional media channels. In the meantime, there are FREE or inexpensive online PR channels for the entrepreneur.

Online PR

# Blogging



Online PR requires quality content. If your company wants to implement an online PR strategy, this means someone needs to be generating content that your ideal customer will be interested in. Someone in your firm needs to act as the blog project leader, assigning people blogging projects. The key to blogging is to position your firm and its employees as thought leaders. You need to give 25% of your expertise away for free. Blog entries must have information

useful to your ideal customer. It cannot be company propaganda or your ideal customer will lose interest very quickly and not read. As a company blogger, you want to act as a resource for prospective clients. Prospective clients will repeatedly visit or subscribe to your blog, and ideally at some point will want to engage with your firm.

Once you have generated quality content on your blog, it's time to proactively distribute this information through various web channels. The blog itself will be hosted on your website. As you distribute blog entries over the web on websites that your ideal customer will frequent, the odds that ideal customers will discover your firm increase.

# Article Distribution



There are various FREE article directories on the web. Article directories include Google Knol, Ezine, eHow, HubPages, Squidoo, etc. An excellent list of the top article directories can be found here: [www.vretoolbar.com/articles/directories.php](http://www.vretoolbar.com/articles/directories.php). As stated, you can re-purpose many of your blog postings as articles and submit to article directories. As a reminder, the objective of any article is to discuss a topic that is of interest to your target market and to position yourself and your firm as thought leaders.

When you submit an article, make sure to include a link back to your website. In that

link, include anchor text that consists of keywords you want to target. For example in the author's bio section, include a link to your website with keywords like "San Diego web design" or whatever keywords your a typical prospect will be typing into a search engine. Search engines give weight to external links because that gives websites credibility.

# Social Media

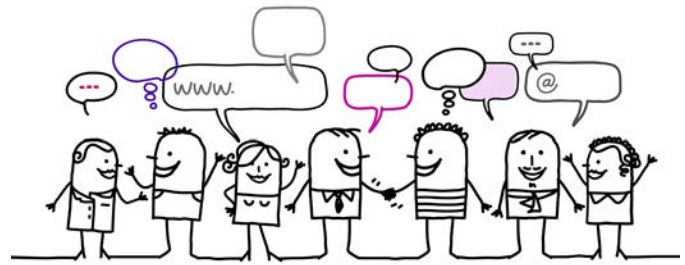
Another great method to disseminate quality content and generate leads is through social media channels. Most people think of social media as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter, but really any online platform that prompts interaction is a social media channel. There are many industry-specific social media platforms that are available.

## LinkedIn

Inbound links from LinkedIn are highly regarded by search engines, making it a great resource for increasing search engine ranking organically. To help grow your firm's presence on LinkedIn, here are a few suggestions to implement:

- **Optimize your company profile:**
  - Add products/services
  - Add three custom banners
  - Add SEO optimized urls to company and employee profile links
  - Add keywords to company profile
- **Engage with colleagues, peers, and other potentially interested parties:**
  - Join industry related groups
  - Participate in group discussions
  - Start discussions and share your information within these groups
- **Get more followers:**
  - Invite personal profile connections to follow your company's LinkedIn page.
- **Encourage these followers to share information, stories, and latest news**
  - Follow LinkedIn connections on Twitter

As mentioned, an effective way to gain exposure with your target market and position your company as a thought leader is through LinkedIn group



discussions. LinkedIn has groups for almost any industry group and these groups discuss a variety of topics. Begin by finding groups that ideal customers or strategic partners may be involved with. From there, start answering questions on these groups. Once you become comfortable, start a discussion topic on your own. Once you're really confident, begin your own group where your target audience will congregate.

## Twitter

Twitter is a great tool for expanding your reach into new online communities and to get more links back to your firm's website. Following are a couple recommendations for growing the number of people following your firm:

- **Engagement:**
  - Follow industry related groups on Twitter to encourage more people to follow you back
  - Add comments and feedback to the Tweets from people you follow
  - Include keywords in Tweets
  - Re-Tweet others messages and provide your insights
- **Get more followers:**
  - Add popular #hashtags to your Tweets to display in other streams
  - Follow your LinkedIn connections on Twitter
  - Add Twitter feed to Facebook fan page

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# Social Media (continued)

## Facebook

Facebook is a no-brainer if you are trying to build a community focused on your firm's services or products. There has been a lot of buzz in the news that search engines are going to start looking at the amount of people that "Like" your website as an indicator to how authoritative a website is to their audience. To ensure that your firm is prepared, following are a few recommendations to increase your numbers on your fan page.

- Create custom Facebook welcome page to encourage people to like your page
- Add applications such as a Twitter feed to make the page more dynamic
- Customize the fan page with information about your product/services, product launch dates, industry news, discounts, etc.
- Send a message to your personal Facebook friends and ask them to "Like" your Facebook fan page
- Write status updates that encourage feedback from fans: polls, surveys, quizzes, etc.
- Become a fan of other organizations that complement your own firm
- Include keywords in status updates
- Add brief company overview and website url to the Information section of your firm's fan page

To help further spread the word of your social media accounts we recommend the following:

- Add links to your social media accounts to your website
- Add social share buttons to let people easily share your content
- YouTube – create a YouTube channel that includes company webinars that presents

industry trends, demos your product (if applicable), shares customer feedback, discusses the latest news, etc.

- Add links to your social media accounts in your email signatures
- Add social media account buttons in your offline marketing collateral: brochures, purchase orders, business cards, etc.
- Send an email to contacts letting them know where they can find you and encourage their participation



## Google Alerts

As you perform online PR, make sure to sign up your firm and its principals for Google Alerts. Please see [www.google.com/alerts](http://www.google.com/alerts). You should sign up your firm's name and possibly some other terms. By signing up for Google Alerts, you will receive alerts when your firm or other terms are registered on Google. If one of your articles is featured on a site, Google Alerts will notify you.



# Email Marketing



With current SPAM laws, a business must be very careful when implementing an email marketing strategy. Do not trust email list brokers who want to sell you email addresses of business decision makers – typically these lists do not consist of accurate contact information. Plus, your business can get in trouble if you are associated with a shady email broker company.

Because SPAM laws are so stringent, an email recipient must opt-in to receive marketing emails. An opt-in can be as

simple as someone giving you his or her business card at a networking event. With all email marketing correspondence, an opt-out option must be present.

Email marketing is best utilized as a lead nurturing tactic – allowing your company to remain top of mind with current and prospective customers. Email marketing correspondence can be done weekly, monthly or quarterly. You don't want to nag your contacts so a monthly or quarterly email is advisable. As with social media and blogging, it's important that the email marketing messages are not corporate propaganda but information useful to your recipients. It's all about thought leadership and giving 25% of your expertise for free.

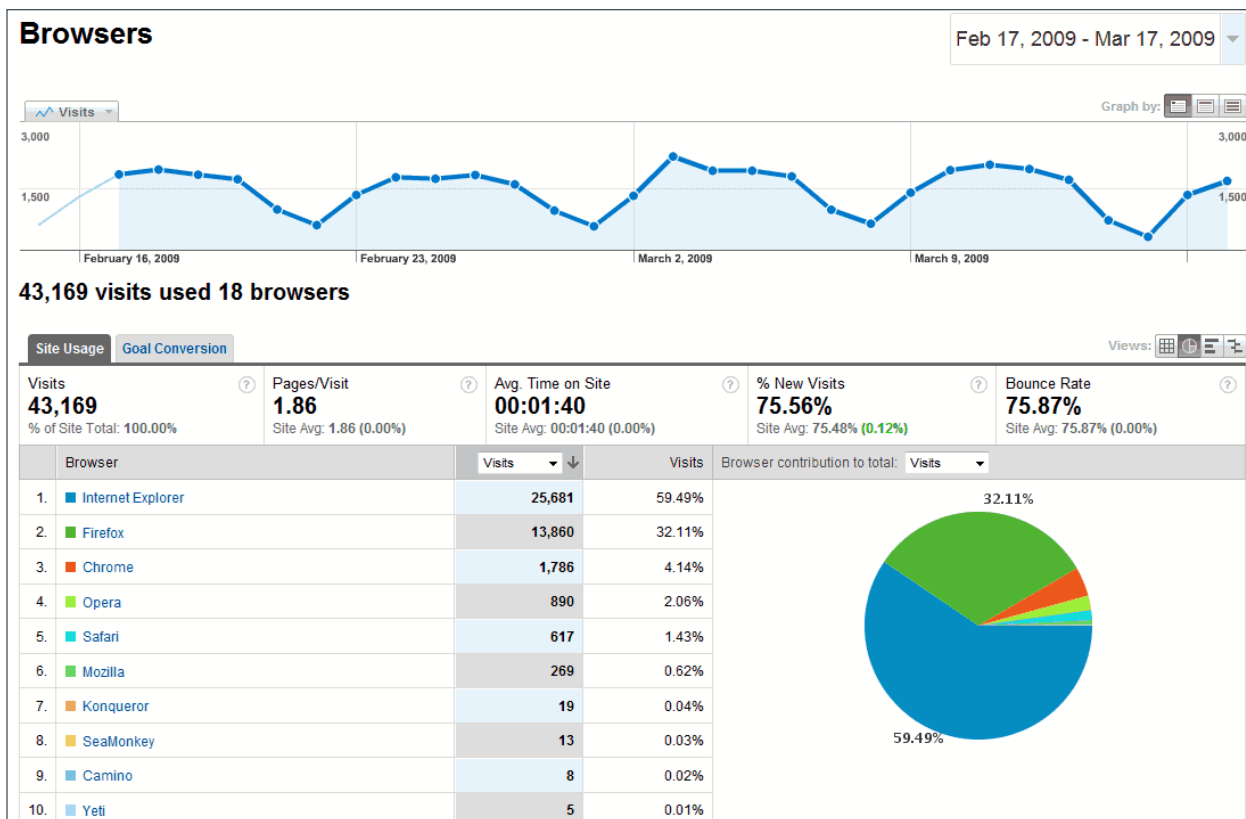
Email marketing can be utilized as a lead generation tactic but ensure it's an opt-in list. Some associations and publications allow a business to access their member email list for a fee. These groups can be chambers of commerce, business magazine subscriber lists, bar associations, industry-specific groups, etc. Typically you "rent" these lists with the association managing the email process. You provide the email content and they send to their member or subscriber list. The recipients opted in when they approved third-party strategic partners of these groups to contact them.

Email marketing is a necessary tactic for small businesses to remain in the market's consciousness.

# Analytics: Measure Results!

There is a famous saying in marketing, "I know 50% of my marketing is working, I just wish I knew which 50%." Fortunately, with web marketing, this saying is not applicable. Your web marketing tactics can be continuously analyzed and optimized. With web analytics you can see who is visiting your website, their location, pages viewed, time on the website, etc. You can also see if another website has referred them. As you participate in online PR and social media, you can see if these tactics are generating traffic on your website.

Installing Google Analytics on your website is strongly advised. Examining Google Analytics regularly will ensure that your online marketing efforts are generating ROI. You can download Google Analytics here: [www.google.com/analytics/](http://www.google.com/analytics/). It's important you don't just guess and make assumptions about marketing efforts, but have legitimate data to help you make sound marketing decisions for your small business.



# Aligning Marketing with Sales



Last but definitely not the least important marketing tactic is to make sure your marketing and sales processes are aligned.

When I pose the question to small business owners, “What is marketing?” I typically receive complicated, convoluted answers. An answer like “Promoting your brand to increase your customer base” is pretty good. However, some people start tripping over words like branding, advertising, sales, promotion, etc. The simplest definition of marketing is the generation of ideal customer leads for your sales team. That’s truly what marketing should be doing. Marketing should be placing a ball on the tee for your sales team to drive out of the ballpark.

The marketing function is comprised of many tactics, many of which have been covered in this white paper. A mix of these tactics will allow you to reach your ideal customer and generate leads for the sales team. In turn, the sales team will build relationships with these leads and hopefully convert them into profitable clients.

Many people will argue that the sales team should be handling lead generation, but I disagree. The skill sets of sales and marketing people are very different. Sales people are more tactical and focus on building one-on-one relationships with qualified prospects. Listening and tailoring an optimal solution are the primary responsibilities of a sales person. On the other hand, marketing people are more strategic. Their focus is on developing a plan to reach your ideal customer with a timely message. Once the leads are qualified by the marketing team, they are handed off to the sales team so they can understand the prospect’s challenges and develop a plan to help.

Both marketing and sales need to be on the same page with issues like a company’s ideal customer profile, department roles and responsibilities, and the definition of a qualified lead. If marketing and sales are focusing on the tasks they perform best, your company’s business development activities will be running at an optimal level.

# Conclusion: Focus on the Basics



It is important to remember that you should not jump to tactics until you have a solid marketing foundation. You need to get the basics down before you can start getting really creative with your marketing. Don't go do a web video, when you're not even sure what your UVP is. Don't develop a website before you've developed a basic corporate identity for your company. A strategic plan will ensure you spend your marketing dollars wisely and provide a sturdy foundation that will make any future marketing, sales or PR efforts more valuable over time.

In marketing, just as in painting, the key is preparation and know-how. That requires self-awareness, patience, and securing assistance from an expert who can make sure you are doing everything just right to create a masterpiece.

This white paper was created by the team at Bop Design.  
Contact us for more information:

**Bop Design**

[www.bopdesign.com](http://www.bopdesign.com)

760.470.1275

[info@bopdesign.com](mailto:info@bopdesign.com)