Branding Your Business Using Social Media

Week Two- Finding and Connecting to Your Customers

Week Three- Google's Zero Moment of Truth- Using Google Analytics and Tools to help identify new Business Opportunities

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Week 2 & 3- Finding Ways to Connect Your Brand to Your Customers and

Understanding and Winning the Zero Moment of Truth using Google Tools

Your Brand- Finding Ways to Connect With Your Customers

Outbound and Inbound Marketing

Traditional marketing, including everything from ads in print media, TV, Radio, press releases, flyers, direct mail and more are what we might term "outbound" media. Even email, pay per click ads and the like can be considered outbound marketing where you send messages out to a wide market, hoping to capture someone's attention and in turn, their dollars. By contrast, inbound marketing is using a different set of strategies to have more customers find you instead of you looking for them.

Inbound marketing usually starts with your website. This is considered your "home base" just like your physical business location acts as your home base for your business. Inbound marketing strategies use things like search engine optimization, blogging and social media to help generate attention and noise about your business so customers can find you and your products easier. This also means your customers, current and future, become a part of your marketing team.   These are folks that you will rely on to help spread the word of your goods and services, in a much more peer to peer relationship than every before.

Inbound marketing works best when you have a great product or service and have great stories to tell. This can be everything from helping to educate your customers and the public about your industry, goods and services, to telling compelling stories on what your business has and can do for others,

Unlike outbound marketing where you spend a fixed amount of dollars hoping to gain the attention of people in need of your business's goods or services for a defined period of time, inbound marketing is more a long term strategy to build relationships, reputation, and hopefully, in return, a longer-lasting and higher value customer relationship and experience. Outbound marketing is perhaps more shotgun in its approach, where inbound marketing can be much more niche and targeted to specific audiences.

Inbound marketing includes the use of tools like Google analytics to help benchmark and measure all of your marketing, outbound and inbound, and provides detailed information that can help you understand your customers and your business better.

For example, one client had two main business streams- one for business to business, (B2B) and one for business to consumer. (B2C) After looking more closely at their website, it was clear the business was emphasizing the B to B end of the business and was not creating an environment that welcomed the B to C customers. By looking at overall search trends, we saw that the B to C market seemed to be increasing, while the B to B business was decreasing over time. This gave the business further insight into what they already saw taking place in terms of their business traffic and bottom line, and allowed them to re-allocate finds to better meet the needs of the B to C clients, and grow that end of the business.

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Inbound marketing leverages social media by creating "outposts" that can help drive traffic back to your home base, or website. Once there, you will have to have clear calls to action, information and ways to help these inbound "eyeballs" to find what they need and make it easy for them to do business with you. If your home base does not allow people to contact you or transact business, you could be losing sales and customers you didn't even know you had an opportunity to reach. Additionally, through RSS feeds, you can automatically update customers of new content, at their option, without any additional work on your part.

The First Steps in Inbound Marketing- Creating a Great Homebase

Your inbound marketing strategy will depend heavily on your particular business, the social platforms, if any, you choose to engage in, and your customer base.

We'll take an example of a generic local business person and the steps they might want to take to develop an inbound or "customers find you" strategy, to help augment their current marketing.

But before we get full-blown into Content Strategy, we're going to talk a little bit about your website. The purpose of inbound marketing is to get folks to come to your home-base of operations, which is, online, primarily your website. As a result, you want to take some initial steps to make sure that home is as welcoming and presentable as possible for all your new potential visitors, as well as the customers you already interact with regularly.

I'm sure you've gone to websites that are eye-popping-ly loud, or others that are difficult to navigate and find what you need. Just like navigating a physical location or store, you need to make sure your website is set up to do what you want it to do- help customers and clients find out about you, your products and services, and contact you or make a purchase right on the site. (Call to Action). Regardless of the great information or products you have on your site, if they aren't presented in a way that helps people find what they're looking for and take action, you are potentially losing business without even knowing it. This is why having a great home-base website is the first thing to look at in your marketing plan. **The great content we'll talk about creating will help new people find your site and attract more customers, but if they still can't figure out how to convert or do business with you once they get there, all that effort will be wasted.**

1. Website and web optimization

By now, I'm going to assume that most of you have some sort of presence on the web. Google is the new phone book, and with more and more people choosing VOIP and cell phones to replace traditional land lines, those receiving actual phone books is diminishing quickly.

If you don't have a website for your business, there are very simple tools, including a simple Wordpress site, that can be configured into a great website at very low cost. It's currently being used by about 15.5% of all websites on the web, and 54.1% of the content management systems that can be identified according to w3Tech, a well respected web technology survey company. Wordpress has some simple e-commerce plug-ins that will allow sales and conversions

from your website as well. Besides being inexpensive, Wordpress is simple to maintain and use- anyone can do it, really. Even if you'd like a fully customized look on Wordpress, the costs of hiring a wordpress designer and developer or buying a premium template will be significantly less than developing a site on other platforms, and much easier for you to manage in house rather than wait for updates from an outside third party.

Let's assume our local business person, Jane, has a basic website already

. Jane's website contains basic information about her business, and how to find her. Jane is not currently using her website for more than an online "billboard" for her business, and she's not sure how many people really find her on her website, anyway. What can she do to make sure her site is working well for her?

Steps to Up Your Website Game

1. Add Google Analytics

Google analytics is free and when added to your website, can give you more information than you probably will ever need to know about what people are doing, clicking on, reading, and otherwise interacting with your website, as well as how they got there in the first place. Looking at your Analytics should be a once a month chore at least, to see what content your audience likes, and how they are finding your website. Are they finding you through their desktop? Which browser? mobile? iPad? Cell phone? Which operating system? How does your website look in that format? All of these questions can be answered once you have a good analytics package, and we recommend Google's because it is not only free, but quite robust in the information it provides and what you can do in customizing URL's for marketing campaigns.

2. Basic Website Optimization

One of the great free tools out there is Website Grader by Hubspot. (websitegrader.com) It will not only review you website, but let you know other things you could be doing to optimize the site for inbound marketing. Hubspot is a great company that offers many of these services, however, many items can and should be accomplished on your own. this helps you figure out whether there are additional tweeks you can make right away to help your website be found in search engines.

3. Website Eyeball Test

Try to draw what your website looks like, right now, without looking at it. What stand out to you? Do it here:

Now pull up your website on your computer. How close were you?

Now step back and look at your website from across the room- what features stand out to you? Is there a clear call to action? What do you want people to do when they come to your site? Buy Something? Call you? Make reservations? This should be somewhat obvious from even far away, if your goal is to capture and keep attention.

What stood out? What did not? List those items here. This will be come a list of things to consider tweeking on your site to make your goals and what you want people to do on your site more obvious.

4. **Outside of the Website Stuff to Do**

a. Make sure you business is listed in Google Local a.k.a Places for Business (www.google.com/placesforbusiness)

b. Set up Google Alerts for your name, your business name(s) (www.google.com/alerts)

c. Consider adding buttons for any social media sites you may be using, and/or widgets onto your website, making it easy for people to connect with you on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus and any other sites you might find relevant to your business.

d. Start looking at your website analytics, at least once a month or so. Where are people coming from? Is it local traffic or a wider audience? What's your most popular content? What are the "hot spots" on your website? Are you getting traffic from any social media channels you're using? (This will help you figure out what your best current content is, and this will be a baseline measure before you start adding new content or experimenting with tracking the effects of social media as part of your brand strategy.)

2. Finding Your Customers- Fishing Where the Fish Are

It's a big internet, and people are always searching for businesses to help them solve problems, big and small. As we'll talk about more with the session on Content Strategy, the more people feel like they know you and your business, and like you, the more likely you are to maintain a great reputation and attract more business. If people don't know you exist, or you don't have a great reputation online, business may suffer.

A. Taking Stock of current customers.

It's likely that you have email addresses of current customers, or would like to create a database of these email addresses. This is important, because it creates an easy way to consistently contact existing customers, and a way to identify your customers across social channels.

If you don't have a current email database of customers, start asking customers for their email with each transaction. You can do this through analog methods like a notebook at a checkout counter, exchanging business cards, or simply asking people for the information through a contact form on your website. Treat this information as one of your business's most valuable assets. Just like your rolodex of yore, this contact information is a tangible reminder of your relationship with your customers, and you should treat it with the same care you would treat your own contact information.

With this list of emails, match it with services like LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter. Add customers and people in your email database as friends, contacts and followers as appropriate. This extends your email relationship across other channels, and provides another human touchpoint between you and your customers.

In addition to using your existing customer data to add folks to your networks, ask your customers how often they want to hear from you. Many businesses send email newsletters on some frequency- monthly, every other month, quarterly, etc.   If your existing customers show a strong preference for frequency of contact, try to stick to that. Flooding email boxes with unwanted information will likely lead to people opting out of your email, or worse yet, labeling it as spam. Besides being simply courtesy and good business practice, this will also keep you from running afoul with CAN SPAM regulations.

B. Listening

Now that you have all your exiting customers loaded up on your social networks, let's take some steps to setting up some listening posts to help you identify any potential business opportunities.

a. **Google Alerts** One of the best free tools Google offers is Google Alerts. You can set up "alerts" where google will email you whenever your chosen words or phrases are mentioned online. Key alerts to set up are those for your name, your business name, Your website name (if different) and the names of any competitors, any business terms of art, etc. Google will let you choose when to receive this information. If you also have a google Gmail account, you can even have this information skip your inbox and have it automatically placed into a folder you can review once a week for relevant information.

The information you see in alerts will let you know if there are any news articles, blog posts, or other information being said about you or topics of interest you should know about. the industry terms will likely deliver relevant news and updates to you, allowing you an easy way to stay up to date with your industry, but also have a constant stream of news you can aways use to create interesting content or information for your blog, newsletters, videos or other online content.

b. **iGoogle, Google Reader, Flipboard, In or other Aggregation Services**. Many blogs and websites run on something called RSS- or really simple syndication. If you go to a website with an RSS symbol- likely a variant on this orange symbol, you'll be able to "subscribe" to this site's content and have it sent to you either by email or through a "feed to something like Google Reader or in a "widget" on iGoogle.

This may sound complicated, but it's very easy, and will allow you to create a virtual newspaper customized to your interests and needs. For example, I have feeds for the following news services and blogs as part of my personal iGoogle page- The New York Times, Financial Times, Time Magazine, Wired and Fast Company magazines, BBC, NPR, O'Reilly Radar, Mashable, All Facebook Blog, Christopher S. Penn and Marketing over Coffee podcast, Huffington Post, Gmail blog, Seth Godin's Blog, Whitehouse.gov, and a few others. This lets me get a "headline" version of news and see what might require deeper reading or

investigation later on. It also gives an aggregate look at what different news channels find important, and if there's something there worth doing a news-cycle type of post on for my blog.

Likewise, you can also customize your google news page to give you more about certain categories if you choose, helping you be a source of the latest information in areas of your interest. Yu choose your information sources and the information comes to you, rather than going out to seek out new information. For the truly dedicated, you can even create an RSS feed for certain Twitter hashtags, and have all those tweets dumped into your reader as well.

c. Google Trends   If you have a list of keyword terms for your industry or business, take the time once a quarter or so and pop them into Google trends. You can adjust trends for different regions, timelines and the like, and you'll get a good idea if there's any seasonality to these terms in terms of search volume, as well as a general trend, up or down, in terms of overall traffic. this can tip you off to larger trends in your industry, as well as potentially seasonality that can help you time traditional and digital marketing efforts.

C. Listening to Competitors As you start to create listening posts for information about yourself, don't forget to follow information about your competitors, and follow them on the social networks as well. We know of more than one case where a company was following a competitor's stream, overheard a complaint about the competitor's service, and provided helpful and timely information to that disgruntled customer, and managed to win new business for being the first one to solve the client's problem.   You can only do this, however, if you spend a little time listening to your competition's feed as well as your own.

3. Community (and Content) is King- What Do I Say to Them?

By beginning a listening program, and connecting with your current customers through social networks, you're well on your way to creating a bit of community. As the leader of your community, you can decide what kind of leader you'll be. Obviously, we'd all like to be part of a community with a benevolent leader who is always helping us, giving us great information, and inspiring us to try new things. But sometimes you may want to be a different kind of leader- forceful and direct. Regardless of your style, treat your opt-in community online like you would a group of children or young adults in your care. Act in a way to inspire respect. Try to help them with their problems. Respect their feelings, even if they seem over the top. Provide them with advice and guidance as needed, and try not to bash competitors in public if you can. Give your community ideas, events and activities they can engage with.

Don't take your community for granted- it's the network you can use to sell to, but to spread your messages to their friends and networks that may also be interested in your products and services.

In order to keep your community active online, try the following:

a. **Create a blog and write about what matters most to you and your business.** Is it news that effects your industry? News in your community? The story of how you got into business? How you helped a customer in a predicament? Every business has these stories, and generates more of them every day. Share these with your community, and offer them something of value in return.

b. **Use your social media channel to highlight other things that catch your eye.** Facebook is like hanging out with your friends at a party. That might not always be the time to sell, but it's a great time to share stuff about your day and what you do, mixed into the ongoing conversation. Make sure to spend time talking about stuff other than your business, but don't hold back from talking about what is important to you.

c. **Look for reasons why anyone should care.** Even people with potentially "boring" businesses like accounting or estate planning can find something to talk about with their community. Accountants can talk about everything from keeping your money organized, to tax planning, to taking deductions, as well as general news about the economy, savings, retirement, college- you name it. How about teaching kids to be good with money? If you think about it, anything important enough to do for a job, should offer you something you can share with others, and in turn, show them what you know. Statistics say that people usually require seven touches before converting from a prospect to a customer- social media offers you lots of opportunities to start making some of these 7 touches in a very lightweight way, giving your potential business relationship a huge jump ahead of a cold call or impersonal advertisement.

d. **Look for ways to talk about your customers and highlight them**. There's nothing people love more than being praised and singled out as someone who is smart or successful. By telling stories where your customers can be the heroes of the story, you help them and their business as well as your own. You also show other customers that you are as interested in their success as your own, and we all love feeling part of a larger team.

e. **Your website is a virtual representation of your business.** You need to make sure it works the same way. Can people find what they need? Are they getting lost? Does a salesperson interrupt them, or do they make offers for help, or do they get ignored? Is there an easy way for a customer to find what they're looking for?

f. **Likewise, is your content fresh and current?** Many people will have a website set up for them, and it doesn't get updated very often, making the information stale. Couple this with the fact that Google rewards fresh content with higher rankings, having refreshed content on your site is a big plus. The more ways you can find to keep the information you feed to your community across all channels fresh, the greater the level of engagement is likely to be.

Creating Awesome Content

I always recommend the book, Content Rules, by CC. Chapman and Ann Handley as a great handbook on content creation for the web.   Many of the points we'll talk about in class are well covered in this book, along with examples of businesses using these guidelines to create great content for their business.

Content is generally text, videos, pictures, audio, or a combination of the above that helps customers get to know your business, your offerings, or even your staff better. Great content has a story line or story arc. It's memorable. It's engaging and entertaining. It could even be funny, tongue in cheek, or surprising (think Mac vs. PC ads run by Apple).

Would a Blog work for you?

Many companies like to add a blog as a way for them to provide fresh content and information on their website, without changing the traditional front page. A blog can be simply added to any existing domain, but it may require a little expertise to get it up and going. ("Installed") Blogs can also incorporate multimedia content like your regular website, and almost every blog allows for an RSS feed (really simple syndication) which allows folks to subscribe to your blog and receive updates by email or in their favorite "reader" whenever you publish new content.

Good web content is like creating your own multi-media magazine. You can have articles, pictures, videos, podcasts- almost anything. The content should be meaningful to your audience, even if you are sharing information about your industry as a whole and it's not specific to your business.   As you think about content you could add to your website, think about your business, and also about your other interests. If you're passionate about cooking, maybe to change up the typical stuff, you could add a favorite holiday recipe on your site. The more your business seems like a living, breathing person, the more of a relationship will form between you and your customers.

Your blog content can also serve other purposes, and be changed, as appropriate to feed your other social media sites, newsletters, emails, press releases and the like. It can help demonstrate your expertise and that you are keeping up with changes in your industry while providing useful information to your customers. Just make sure your content is frequent enough to keep things fresh, but not so much that it overwhelms your audience. You don't want to kill your customers inboxes, or have your newsletter labelled as spam.

Rules of Thumb

1. Keep a mix of fresh and ever-green content on your website.

2. Consider adding an email newsletter for customers, and allow web sign up. Do not abuse this tool, or people will start labeling it as spam or opting out. You will need to comply with CAN SPAM rules.

3. Consider incorporating a mix of formats with your content. Pictures, slideshows, videos, audio podcasts- mix it up and keep it interesting.

4. Have a content strategy. Is there seasonality to your business? When would you consider doing a big push and why? Can you tie your traditional marketing into your website by adding custom URL's to traditional print advertising? Can you add new content- blogposts, video, etc. to your website to coincide with these pushes? As part of your content strategy, try to think of what you could do to make customers come back again and again to your website, and what you could provide for them on their return. How do you build an ongoing interactive relationship with your customers?

5. Content is King, but Conversion is Queen

Let's face it. The best and most attractive website with the most interesting and interactive content still has to do one important thing- Convert. You want something out of all these efforts, and I'm going to assume it's money. (Fame and being beloved by the community is awesome, but even non-profits want their websites to convert people from "window shoppers" to donors to the cause.)

There's always a balance on your website or on social media channels between connecting with clients, making sales, and making your clients uncomfortable with the "salesy" aspects of your presence. You ALWAYS have to remember to make sure you make it easy for people to give you money- big buttons to help people convert, whether that's finding your store, booking your services, or whatever you most want them to do- make sure it's obvious.

However, if your website seems to shout or yell at its customers, especially using ALL CAPS!! And LOTS of EXCLAMATION points!!!!!! and bold colors, it can seem a little too obvious and used- car lot ad-ish. For example, let's take a look at two examples. Walmart actually does a fantastic job at making it's call to action- the items in the middle, and the car icon on the top right, really obvious. There's information, easy navigation, but it's not too over the top.

Compare this to websites i found looking up "breakthrough Miracle cure". Sure enough, the first hit revealed the kind of website that doesn't work well to build a sticky, long term audience- Lots of caps, red print, exclamation point, and "instant results" messages.   Or try any product on the "As Seen On TV" website.

If you want your website, and in turn, any additional traffic you are driving to your website from social media, to get you more money, you have to make sure it's well designed. Here are a few of the most important pointers:

14 Quick Tips for Better Web Design

1. **Design Your Website for your Customer, Not for You.**

2. **Your business does something useful. Customers need your services, information, or to join your community. Make sure they can do any/all of that easily.**

3. **Anyone should be able to figure out your website in 3 - 5 seconds. Keep it Simple.**

4. **Use color contrast to draw attention to the important things, like how they can get a hold of your or buy something!**

5. **Don't slow people down on the way to conversion- make sure you don't make them sign up for your newsletter or have too many steps between you and the COmplete Transaction button.**

6. **Remember your website is only one part of your marketing strategy- you are hiring it to do a very specific job. Know what that is.**

7. **Make the navigation crystal clear and follow the Three Click rule.**

8. **Cutesy can work sometimes, but keep the navigation obvious and easy to use.**

9. **Make sure you give people a reason to come back- a consistent, sticky audience is better than a 1,000 non-converting web drive-bys.**

10. **Don't overload a page with too much text. Think museum, not Grandma's attic.**

11. **Use Graphics and pictures to make a point.**

12. **Remember that Flash makes your website invisible to people with mobile phones and tablets.**

13. **Autoplay music and video can be a real turn off especially if you want people to come to the site during the work day.**

14. **Use your analytics package to measure the success (and challenges) of your website and tweek accordingly, then measure again.**

Week 3: Identifying and Measuring Your Goals

Zero Moment of Truth: Finding Ways to Use Google to be There Before the Sale

Google has come out with some great research and an e-book called "The Zero Moment of Truth". It refers to the fact that people are researching businesses and products online long before they ever reach the shelf to make a selection. They're using the aggregate data available through search engines to learn about you, your company and services, and compare it to others long before you ever get a phone call. They may have had their interest sparked by an immediate need, a recommendation, word of mouth, or by traditional marketing materials like flyers, direct mail, advertisements or the like. But whether you will win the Zero Moment of Truth will depend on your ability to be found and to show potential customers your best assets and opportunities up front, while they are still in the research process. Let's look at some examples:

-Shoppers looking for coupons and best deals in their email box or online before heading to the mall over Christmas;

-Shoppers checking into Foursquare on their phone at the mall, looking for any coupons or deals they can take advantage of while searching for the perfect holiday gift;

-Office managers researching what printer is best before running out to the local office supply store; she will compare reviews and prices before deciding where to go;

-Visitors from out of town consult their phones and various apps to find a local restaurant and make a reservation via OpenTable;

-A young woman looks up information about the person she's supposed to interview with that day for a new job, seeing if she can find common ground to talk about, and so she can be well prepared for the interview;

-An employer looking up information about someone coming in for a job interview, to see what this person's past experience might be and read recommendations on LinkedIn;

-Moms looking up information on various decongestants on her mobile phone while waiting to picking her son up from school, so she cans top on her way home;

-a Husband and Wife consulting their phones to see if the deal on this new dishwasher is as good as the one being offered down the street at a competitor;

- A man looking to see if he can get a better deal on that new tennis racket online instead of the price in the store, and also consults reviews to see if this racquet will really help improve his backswing.

Information is a Double Edged Sword

Information about your products and services are now ubiquitous, whether you know it or not. So is information from all of your competition. And if you do not have a lot of information available, people will start to wonder why.

In the information age, your presence online and the feedback other people give to your business becomes a bigger concern than ever before. That's why you need to make sure your customer's first impression- whether it's in person, by phone, or on the web, is the best it can be. You also have to worry about what your competitor's are doing, and how

you can differentiate yourself from them in these venues as well. Let's take a look at the information that sits behind this Zero Moment of Truth, and how you can start using it to your advantage.

In **The Zero Moment of Truth**, Google explains that the old model of consumer conversion depended on the following customer flow:

Figure 2-1: The traditional 3-step mental model

This model becomes disrupted when many consumers have a computer with them everywhere they go. Smart phones are in many consumer's pockets, and tablets are becoming the additional screen in the living room, so that even while watching commercials, consumers can cross-compare offers with competitors without ever leaving the couch. Not only can they compare your services to those of others (assuming they didn't fast-forward through your commercial with On-Demand TV services or TIVO) but they can check out online reviews to see what other consumers think of your offerings as well. Your reputation has truly preceded you, and is as much owned by the online search engines and various review websites as it is by you personally.

Now, with the Zero Moment of Truth, the classic customer flow has become the following:

Figure 2-2: The new mental model
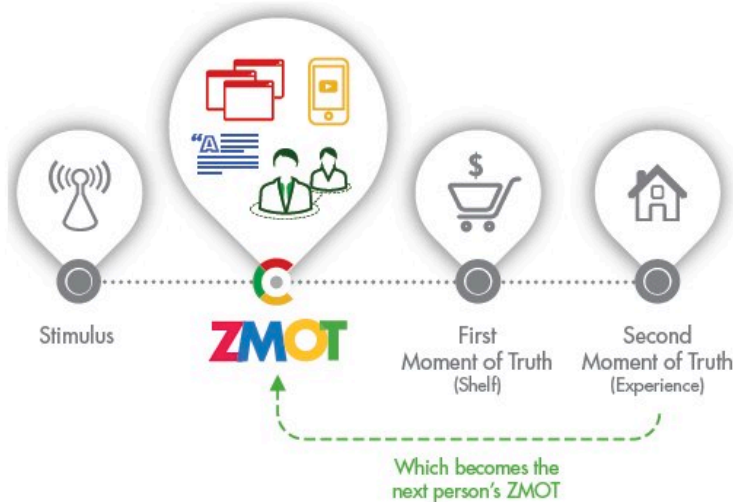
What Can We Do in Response to the Zero Moment of Truth?

Businesses need to understand what the lead time is in decision making for their industry. In the appendix of the Zero Moment of Truth e-book, Google has shown heat maps of the decision and research of products "hotspots" in various categories. Are there any trends in your industry that you can take advantage of? For example, if you run an HVAC or construction related firm, people may have two times of consideration- one that involves planning ahead for a major expenditure, and another that involves immediate need. You have to tweek your marketing to meet customers in both areas, and provide them tools and information to help make conversion easier. On the other hand, if you are a restaurant, you'll see some people search in advance, probably for a special occasion, but many people plan within a three day window, or at the last minute, when the need arises. For this sot of business, maybe providing incentives for people making reservations in advance makes sense, but also some last minute specials might turn potential customers your way instead of towards your competition down the street.

But unless you know a bit about the purchase cycle in your industry and of your existing customers, how will you know when to time your promotions, marketing and advertising to be most effective? As with everything these days, we'd all like to make better and more efficient choices with our dollars, whether that's as a consumer or business person. And for businesses, every dollar saved can be money in your pocket- it's all about making sure you are maximizing the return on your expenditures.

The Three Questions Consumers Want to Know

- Will it save me money?
- Will it save me time?
- Will it improve my life?

How does your business help consumers with these needs? A local wine shop will perhaps want to appeal to several needs- it wants to provide something consumers will want, and price is a relevant factor, as is your location and convenience. But to stand out, you might want to compete on the "improve my life" category- are there fun or aspirational aspects of your shop that set you apart? Do you offer better service and help teach people about wine? Can you make them feel smarter and more sophisticated than other stores in town? Is purchasing from you a great experience and worth the drive?

If you run an insurance company, you need to make sure you can deliver the security we all want from insurance, at a price that makes us feel like we are doing a wise thing (like eating our vegetables) but at a cost that seems justified. The prices need to be competitive with other folks as well, and you'll need to provide education for your customers, helping them feel like they have made a good purchase that will keep them safe like safety belts. After all, you are really providing them with a way to save money in the future, in case something bad happens, by paying money now- so you have to be sensitive to our inherent optimism that we're invincible.

You can see that regardless of your industry, you need to be able to make a case to the customer that your product or service will met a need they have, that probably falls somewhere among these three questions.

Why You Shouldn't Worry Too Much About a Bad Review

It turns out that the majority of reviews left by consumers online are good. 80% of reviews are four stars or above. The 20% range from dissatisfied people (and you probably can't please everyone) or people who weren't overwhelmed by what they bought or how they were treated. However, bad reviews can actually be helpful from time to time- they can

provide balance to the glowing reviews, and they may also provide you with information about where you could improve your services or offerings to make them more helpful. Negative comments add authenticity, and make it more likely that people will not view the glowing reviews as plants or what we call online "astroturfing"- planted, positive reviews from insiders, not real customers.

That being said, if your reviews online are largely mediocre or bad, you need to start looking at your offerings and how you can improve. If people are complaining consistently about noise in your restaurant or poor service, maybe you need to look at everything from the way tables are configured to how the staff is trained. Don't take the negative reviews for granted- they are clues to how you can improve your business for customers.

Remember, the conversations that you see online were always taking place- between friends on the phone, at meetings, in car pool lines, at the gym- almost anywhere people gather- only now, you can see how they really feel but might not feel comfortable telling you in person. For example, the social media manager for Dogfish brewery tells a great story of finding a customer complaining on Twitter about the service, and responded by asking what they were wearing and where they were sitting- and then used this information to get a manager to go over and talk to the table and offer to fix things for them. The customer didn't highlight the issue himself in the restaurant- he complained online first- and by listening, the social media manager was able to head off a problem before it really got started.

Really? Even for my small business?

The Google ZMOT survey found that 37% of shoppers used online resources as a driver in making decisions,in 2011- up from 19% in 2010, and I would bet that as smart phones become even more ubiquitous, this number will continue to grow.

And despite the thought that maybe your industry or business is immune, people leave reviews for everything from gum to scotch tape to Bounce Dryer bars as well as things like wine and hotel rooms. If you have a business, likely somewhere out there, someone is expressing an opinion about it. Moreover, someone else is searching for information, doing their own homework before making a decision and spending their money. It's not just a cConsumer's Report world anymore- consumers report their experiences on everything, everywhere, and you have to be prepared.

Figure 5-1: Cross-category chart

Category Purchased	Number of sources used by the typical shopper	Average usage across sources	% of shoppers influenced at ZMOT
Automotive	18.2	34%	97%
Technology (Consumer Electronics)	14.8	30%	92%
Voters	14.7	35%	95%
Travel	10.2	22%	99%
Over-the-Counter Health	9.8	18%	78%
Consumer Packaged Goods: Grocery	7.3	15%	61%
Consumer Packaged Goods: Health/Beauty/Personal Care	7	14%	63%
Quick-Serve Restaurants	5.8	12%	72%
Banking	10.8	25%	91%
Insurance	11.7	26%	94%
Credit Card	8.6	19%	81%
Investments	8.9	20%	89%

Source: Google/Shopper Sciences, Zero Moment of Truth Industry Studies, U.S., April 2011
Sample sizes for each category noted in appendix Figure A-10.

The Seven Ways Google Suggests to Start Winning at the Zero Moment of Truth

1. **Put someone in charge.** Someone at your business should be in charge of checking the analytics on your website at least once a month or so. Is your traffic up or down? What's the most popular content? If you have Google Analytics on the site, what links are being clicked on the most? Where is your traffic coming from?

2. **Find Your Zero Moments**. When are customers making decisions about purchases? Ask your existing customers, and see if you can spot any trends. Are these specific to your business, or are these common in your industry? Can you find when a competitor's customer is unhappy and offer information, products or services at that time? Check google's keyword tool - for free- and see the variations in search terms you think are relevant for your business.   Are there certain high volume searches you can take advantage of? Are there any you might consider using in web content or for online PPC ads?

3. **Answer the questions people are asking.** Set yourself up to be an expert in your field. Go to blogs, social media sites, and more and help answer questions for folks when it's appropriate. Become a part of the ongoing conversation, and provide information to people- you'll become a trusted source, and this should lead to additional traffic and hopefully conversions on your website as well.

4. **Optimize Your Site, Keeping Your Zero moments in mind**. Make sure when you are crafting content (including audio and video) for your website, you are using those key terms that people are searching for. If you are using more obscure terms, that may be state of the art but aren't what people are looking for, you may be reducing your ability to attract the customers who are looking for what you offer, but may call it something else. (Think Heart Attack versus Myocardial Infarction.)

5. **Be fast- If possible, follow breaking news trends.** If there's information that's relevant to your industry or business, post information about it on your site, when people are looking for information- it's like having extra snow shovels on hand at the hardware Store and putting them out the moment the weatherman predicts a blizzard- take advantage of opportunities as they present themselves.

6. **Don't forget video/audio.** Remember that people are trying to make connections with your business, and short audio podcasts/videos can help you connect with your customer. Maybe you could offer a How to- such as "How to install your own sink" by a plumbing service, and you can point out which parts of the process are tricky along the way- (ie. Most customers get to this point and get stuck, then they have to call us.) Think of this as making a "how the sausage gets made" lesson, where people will better understand the value of what you offer, and think twice about whether it's in their skill set or whether they should simply call you first.

7. **Jump In!** The longer you are online, and providing valuable information, the better your search ranking will be. There are many more benefits than mistakes, and you can learn along the way. Don't be scared, but also do realize that this will take time and effort in order to pay off, so make sure you have realistic expectations. All of this is a long term strategy, so expect incremental, not overnight results.

EVERY DAY IS SOMEONE'S FIRST DAY www.chrisbrogan.com

December 12, 2011 24 Comments

I took my first ever yoga class the other day, thanks in part to having a yoga instructorgirlfriend. It was at a really nice studio in northern Massachusetts called Roots to Wings. My instructor, Beth, was very aware that I was new. She was very aware that this was my first ever yoga class, and that how I received every bit of this class would likely shape my perception of yoga. Think about that, the burden on that instructor's shoulders. Beth is watching me try to figure out her instructions worrying (at least a bit) that if I don't get it, if I don't enjoy the class, and thinking that she's got to deliver a great experience to me so that I'll consider going forward with the practice she holds so dear.

How often do we think about our own business that way? How often do we build experiences such that we're welcoming of new people? Do we work enough on that? Do we help people get connected and involved? Do we make them feel like we realize it's their first time and we're here to guide them?

DESIGNING A FIRST DAY EXPERIENCE

If you think about the online experience, one way to design a first day experience is to build a "getting started" or "new here" page. Think about what could go onto that page. Maybe you can explain the story you're working on telling with your business. Maybe you can use video and share introductory information in a personal way. And another way you can do this is to connect people to others in your community. There are many ways to start. Can you see it?

I'm certain that neither my site, [chrisbrogan.com] nor my business site, Human Business Works, have done a great job with a first day experience. I'll be redesigning to take care of that in the coming weeks. Why? Because I think it's that important to the way we will do business. Why? Because I believe that all of us accidentally lose people by telling the story from where we are now instead of inviting people into the flow.

FIRST STEPS FOR YOU

Pull back from what you're doing right now. Think not about the grind of stuff you have due, the pressure to produce, and all that. Instead, ask yourself, with a blank piece of paper in front of you, "What story am I telling? Who is my reader? How do I introduce this new person to the story in such a way that they feel invited, welcome, comfortable to learn at their own pace, and an instant part of this community you intend to build?"

Look at your website. Look at your navigation. Look at what stands out and what might be a bit too hidden. Where does your site tell the new person to start? What's the brightest, most obvious button to click? What happens when they go there?

Look at your online presence. How often do you tell a "first day" story in your stream of content? When you post to your Facebook page and your Google+ page or Twitter or wherever you're fishing for new business, consider posting first day information every few days. Maybe daily. Know who does this well? Christopher S Penn.

FIRST DAY PEOPLE BECOME LONG TERM COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Think about those times in your life when you felt warmly invited into a new experience. Sometimes, it's product packaging and marketing that stands in for that. Did you ever wonder why Apple users are practically a cult? It starts all the way down to the cardboard and paper that wraps the product. Beyond that, let me pause your thoughts to say you shouldn't compare yourself to Apple in any other way. They seem to be the odd man out when it comes to building strong social community. Apple users find each other without any help from the company itself. There's a lesson there in and of itself, but for most people, we have to do it the hard way. The difference between feeling warmly invited into a community versus feeling like someone was happy to get your money and send you on your way is day and night. I can name several experiences that have left me feeling warmly invited in. Shopping at Men's Wearhouse makes me feel warmly invited in, for instance. If you look at how Brian Clark and team have rebuilt Copyblogger, note that they've configured the site to have *several* first day experiences built into it. There are many ways to look at first day experiences. When people feel brought into the fold, they want to stick around. They enjoy the feeling of loyalty.

INSTEAD OF INFLUENCE, LOYALTY

In building business, it seems the new flavor of passion is influence. There are companies working constantly to determine the digital fingerprints of influence. People frequently confuse the fact that I have a lot of followers on this or that social network with thinking that I'm influential for their product or service. The reality is that I'm influential when both me and my community have a pre-existing affinity for a product or a service. But let's not get this too far into influence. Instead, let's consider looking at loyalty a bit more than we look at influence. What I believe I could improve in my own business practices is building in more gratitude and loyalty to the people who have supported my efforts. What I believe I can do better in the future is to build a stronger first day experience, and then do more to keep that feeling going. It's one of the bigger focuses I'm making in developing the Human Business Way over at Human Business Works. I believe that loyalty is a much better tool to improve business than influence. More on that shortly. What do you think about all this?

Coupon Websites Are Taking The Wrong Approach

Vijay Sundaram, **SocialTwist** | **Oct. 21, 2011, 2:47 PM** | 773 | 1
Vijay Sundaram is the CMO at SocialTwist.

Coupons, as a promotional strategy, have been around for over a hundred years. But they will continue to flourish only if the coupon sites don't mess them up. Or if the fundamental premise of coupons itself, changes. Rather than serve as promotions to capture an economic segment, coupons become the incentive to promote new consumer behavior – like brand referrals.

Coupons tap into the economic theory of price discrimination. Manufacturers would ideally like to sell to different buyers at different prices, based on their underlying willingness to pay (what economists call price elasticity). For example, they would like to get all the 2,500 consumers who will pay $2.50 for a product, but also get the 1,000 who are willing to pay just $2. A coupon is a way to make this happen. A coupon clipper is the consumer willing to take that extra effort (at some personal cost), like rummaging through a newspaper and clipping coupons, to get the lower price. Others continue to buy at full price.

Coupon sites seem to miss this point. They make it nearly *costless* to find and redeem coupons. Daily deals proliferate on any number of sites. Phone apps can search and stack your coupons. So almost anyone, and everyone, can get the deal.

The plot has been lost. This is no longer a price discrimination strategy for the manufacturer. Not anymore is it a clever application of microeconomic theory that transfers consumer surplus to the producer. It is a *sale!* Almost any customer can get this price painlessly. To top it off, the customer doesn't even have to be loyal. He can switch products at negligible cost. Discounts wind up being huge and the coupon sites slurp off a big chunk of what's left. It even creates perverse incentives for merchants and coupon site salesmen to artificially inflate the regular price and make deals look better than cotton candy.

For a brand, this strategy is simple, neat, and wrong. So why are manufacturers still in the game? There are signs of retrenchment already. Some brands are balking and some deal sites are morphing.

Is there a better play? Indeed, there is. A better strategy for manufacturers would be to focus on a loftier objective – customer acquisition – and use a variety of incentives, coupons among them, to coax happy customers to refer others.

More than 75% of consumers say they seek advice before making purchase decisions. They ask the people they trust. *Remodeling your house?* Chances are

you sought a referral from a friend. *Breakfast ideas for your school kids?* You probably asked another parent, or a relative with kids. Our new world of social networks makes it enormously simple to just ask. It also makes impactful referrals from like-minded people just a click away. Purchase decisions will be made *only* this way. Merchants and brands must capture this opportunity and build it into their promotional strategies and reward programs.

Get your customers to refer your products. Reward them for it. Hand out those coupons, but get something back. Amplify your reach through their networks. The customer gets a deal – you get new business. Now that's good *Couponomics*. **Please follow War Room on Twitter and Facebook.**

Read more:
http://www.businessinsider.com/coupon-websites-wrong-approach-2011-10#ixzz1fBiHod3P

Social Twist reaches 100,000 websites, Former Googler Sanjeev Agrawal Appointed President

Tech Crunch: SARAH PEREZ

Wednesday, August 10th, 2011

http://techcrunch.com/2011/08/10/socialtwist-100000-websites-sanjeev-agrawal-as-president/

Social marketing company **SocialTwist** announced today that it has now reached 100,000 websites, including those run by major brands like ConAgra Foods, P&G, Sara Lee, Barnes & Noble, Jamba Juice, Intel and others. The sites use SocialTwist's enterprise-grade platform to identify and grow their audiences, including core brand influencers. Over the past 12 months, more than 4.8 million consumers have engaged with SocialTwist's "Tell-a-Friend" feature, which encourages social sharing across Facebook, Twitter, email and instant messaging.

SocialTwist has also just appointed former Googler Sanjeev Agrawal, who once was Head of Google Product Marketing, as President of the company. While there, his goal will be to help SocialTwist navigate its way through its next growth period.

Prior to joining SocialTwist, Agrawal was VP Products at TellMe, **acquired by Microsoft**, and the CEO of Aloqa, **acquired by Motorla**. He says that the appeal of SocialTwist was the flexibility of the platform, which seems to be more effective than search for the brands involved – at least in terms of ROI.

Show Us the Money: Referrals and Click-Thrus

We asked SocialTwist for some examples of this claim, and it reported that its own statistics show an average 66% click-thru rate on friend referrals, and over 50% redemption rate on offers, in comparison with the typical digital coupon click-thru rate of just 18%.

In particular, when Sara Lee ran a **social couponing campaign**, it saw over 65,000 visitors in a month, the majority of which were friend referrals. And over 64% chose to refer friends in ex-change for a $2.50 coupon, 30% picked a $1 coupon and 5% took a $0.50 coupon. 71% of these referrals were handled by email, 27% through Facebook and just a paltry 1% through Twitter – incidentally, the same number as MySpace. However, in terms of actual click-thrus, Twitter did better – 29.3%, versus 40.7% for Facebook and 29.3% for email.

ConAgra Foods **also ran a campaign** recently which garnered 16,200 participants over 6 weeks, 29,613 referrals and had a click-thru rate of 43%. In this case, the top referral channel was email, but the top click-thru channel was Twitter.

In other campaigns, a baby product generated 300,000 referrals in 6 weeks, a photo contest re-ceived 800,000 registrations in 30 days and a $1 coupon from a fast food chain accounted for 10% of new traffic to the company's website during the promotional period.

Results like these are what are pushing SocialTwist into its next phase: scaling the company. Prior to now, much of social marketing was still in an "experimental phase," says the company, now it's able to join other channels as key part of marketing budgets.

Taco Bell Beefs Up Facebook 'Likes' - With Leftovers

Christopher Heine | February 17, 2011 | 2 comments
http://www.clickz.com/clickz/news/2027224/taco-bell-beefs-facebook-likes-leftovers

Taco Bell turned a class action lawsuit into a Facebook campaign and helped lift its "likes" by roughly 250,000 during the last week. The quick-serve chain employed a like-gating tactic that's become common among marketers on the social site.
Announced on February 8, the brand offered a free beef taco to Facebook users who "liked" it. The offer was good for consumers who had already "liked" Taco Bell - 5.4 million at the time - as well as newcomers. The fast-food brand committed to giving away 10 million coupons for the tacos, which typically retail from $.99 to $1.09. Consumers had until February 15 to access and use the coupons.
By the end of the promotion, Taco Bell had a total of 5.65 million "likes," a net gain of 250,000. Although Taco Bell did not disclose how many coupons were redeemed, as many as 4 million

free tacos were left on the table. Four million represents the difference between the total number of "likes" - 5.65 million -and the total number of coupons available.

The Irvine, CA-based brand ran Facebook.com ads to drive more "likes" and coupon downloads. It was part of a larger PR campaign attempting to refute an Alabama class action lawsuit that claims Taco Bell's seasoned beef is only 35 percent actual beef.

ClickZ asked two social marketing providers what they thought of a hypothetical example of restaurant chain getting 250,000 "likes" in a week with a giveaway campaign. (To avoid potential bias, we did not ask them specifically about Taco Bell.)

Vijay Pullur, CEO of SocialTwist, said an effort would produce more "likes" if it created incentives for sharing. "If customers were rewarded for passing on [the coupon] to their friends, a successful campaign would have yielded more than a million people," he said. "They should be thinking in terms of the power of word-of-mouth and how to best encourage their customers to share with and talk to their friends."

Kevin Barenblat, CEO of Facebook marketing firm Context Optional, said such a campaign's success is probably best measured by coupon redemption rates, sales numbers, and ROI. "Fan growth and percent of engaged fans are only building blocks to understanding success in social," he said.

Taco Bell didn't reveal many specifics when asked by ClickZ. Brand spokesperson Rob Poetsch wrote in an e-mail that the promotion "was an effective way to leverage the power of social media by thanking and rewarding our most loyal customers for their support."

Which Social Media Marketing Metrics Really Matter? (And To Whom?)

Posted by Nate Elliott on February 23, 2011

http://blogs.forrester.com/nate_elliott/11-02-23-which_social_media_marketing_metrics_really_matter_and_to_whom

We've been pretty vocal over the past couple of years about how marketers should define success in social media and (perhaps more importantly) how they shouldn't define success. To put it bluntly, if you're focusing on fans and followers, then you're almost certainly doing it wrong.

But saying that raises the question: If the number of fans or followers you have doesn't tell us whether you've succeeded as a company, then what *does* it tell you? And if your CEO shouldn't be worried about the number of wall posts you've generated, then who *should* be paying attention to this number?

Since last summer, I've been using a structured model to help my clients focus on delivering the right social media marketing data to various stakeholders inside their organization. Social media

programs throw off so much data that the key to measuring and managing your programs well is focusing each stakeholder on just the pieces of data that are relevant to helping them do their jobs. If part of your job is measuring the success of your social media marketing programs, then you need to start segmenting the stakeholder groups you're providing that data to and tailoring the type of metrics, the volume of metrics, and the frequency of reporting you provide them.

What does that mean in practice? Well, it's little surprise that your operational social media team — the community managers and social strategists who work with social media every day — need a huge volume and depth of data, focused primarily on digital metrics like fans, visitors, and comments. Without that reporting, they can't do their jobs well. But as tempting as it is to show this same data to the rest of your marketing team, they simply don't need that type (or depth, or frequency) of reporting — they mostly need data focused on brand impact, leads, and product trial. Likewise, your executives only need a moderate volume and a low frequency of data about your programs, and that data should be focused on bottom-line business results.

Last night I published a new report, Social Media Marketing Metrics That Matter, and it included the model I've been using:

Role	Social strategists and community managers	Interactive marketers and marketing executives	C-level executives
Perspective	Digital	Brand	Financial
Metrics	Social opportunity • Fans, friends, and followers • Members • Visitors and readers Social health • Posts and comments • Sentiment	Branding • Awareness • Brand attributes • Purchase intent Product trial • Lead generation • Coupon redemption • Sampling	Sales • Conversions • Revenues • Lifetime values
Frequency	Hourly or daily	Per campaign or annually	Quarterly or annually
Tools	Listening platforms and web analytics vendors	Surveys	CRM tools, attribution tools, and surveys

58444   Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

Why did I put the stakeholder groups in the order I did? Partly because as you go from left to right, the rank of the stakeholder gets higher — and partly because as you go from left to right, the volume and frequency of reporting goes down.

But mostly it's because each new group needs to build on the success of the group before it. It's true that the digital metrics that your community managers require can't define success in social

media marketing — but those metrics do tell you if those employees are doing their jobs well, and those smaller victories create the foundation your marketing team needs to succeed. Likewise, the brand and trial metrics that your marketing team should measure in social media aren't the ultimate definition of business success in social media — but they can show that your marketers are using social media well, and without them doing so your business can't get the value it needs from social media. Finally, the business-unit heads and C-level executives will find that the sales and other financial metrics they're tracking are built on the back of those previous successes.

How do you report the impact of social media marketing programs inside your organization? Do you tailor your reporting to different types of employees? Leave your thoughts in the comments below.

Best Web Metrics / KPIs for a Small, Medium or Large Sized Business

December 12, 2011 9 Comments

We have access to more data than God wants anyone to have. Thus it is not surprising that we feel overwhelmed, and rather than being data driven we just get paralyzed. Life does not have to be that scary. In fact a data driven life is sexiest digital life you can imagine.

In this blog post we are going to bring the sexyback. I am going to attempt to significantly simply your life by recommending the critical few metrics you should use to analyze performance of your digital marketing campaigns and website. You'll be able to quickly go from "omg what can I do!" to "omg what am I going to do with all the money and fame I'm earning!"

The approach I'm going to use is to 1. Use my Acquisition, Behavior and Outcomes framework to ensure an end to end view of important activity and 2. Recommend metrics / KPIs you can use based on the size of your company.

Each recommendation comes with hints on what analysis to perform once you have the data, and what changes you could make to your campaigns, content and overall digital strategy. [A summary in pictorial format is at the end of this post.]

Excited? Let's do this!

Best Metrics / KPIs for Small Business Websites

Small business websites are a very fragile ecosystem. People working hard to do the best they can on the smallest possible budgets. But not to worry. They have to start with just four simple metrics to start rocking!

Acquisition:

Clicks? Visits? Backlinks? Impressions? No. We have something magnificent.

Cost Per Acquisition.

Obsess about this metric. You have very little money, you need to know, obsessively, what you get for it. This metric delivers that insight. Oh and everything has a CPA (not just your paid search or display/banner ads). If you are doing SEO then you are likely paying for someone. That's the cost.

Kill things that don't have an optimum CPA. Invest more in ones that do. Simple enough, right?

Tip: Remember this is just cost, not profit. If your product costs you $15 to make then, in the above scenario, you are shipping a crisp $5 bill along with every Social Media order!

Where is it: Most likely in Excel. For Search it is in your Google Analytics or Omniture Site Catalyst reports. But for most other programs (Affiliate, Email, Social, Display) your Cost is likely sitting outside your web analytics tool. So extract the # of conversions, import into Excel, add a column for Cost, do the math, sing or weep (based on what the data says!:)).

If you are paying someone to do web analytics and this metric is not on top of the dashboard they've created for you, it might be time to say sayonara to them.

Behavior:

Page Views? Time on Site? No. You can do so much better!

Bounce Rate.

I continue to be a believer in trying to prompt love at first sight. Ok, ok, I'll settle for delivering relevance. :) Bounce Rate helps you identify campaigns where you might be targeting wrong people (who then come to your site and leave right away) or sending relevant traffic to irrelevant (and often flash filled hideous) landing pages.

Bounce rate helps you find campaigns and landing pages that need to be killed / improved. Everyday.

Where is it: Standard metric in every web analytics tool worth anything. Look at your All Traffic Sources report and your Landing Pages report.

Checkout Abandonment Rate.

I find the fastest way to make money is to take it from the people who have already decided to give it to you. Obsess about checkout abandonment rate (the percent of people who click Start Checkout to those who complete that process).

Focus on checkout steps with the highest abandonment. Tweak like crazy. A/B & Multivariate tests are a good option. But you are a small business…. so just take away as many fields as you can, play with where to show shipping cost (I vote for way up front), reduced the number of checkout steps if you can, ask for account creation at the end of the process rather than start. Try, test, measure, be rich.

Where is it: In Excel. Or if you use Google Analytics: In Paditrack for free. (Google Analytics's native funnels are pretty sub optimal, ignore that entire feature.) For other tools: In KissMetrics. Create a funnel just for the checkout process (from clicking Start Checkout to Thanks for your Order) and both these tools will give you the metric automatically. They also allow you to segment the data! Make love to it.

[Bonus: What is abandonment rate?]

Outcomes:

My favorite Economic Value? No. As a small business I recommend…

Macro Conversion Rate.

You are a small business. Obsess about conversion rates, and everything connected to improving them. What products are people buying? Every single day (ok week) look at the All Traffic Sources report and seek out the Conversion Rate metric. Ruthlessly punish sources that are not working well and reward the pretty babies. Be they Earned, Owned and Paid media – oh and have a marketing strategy that has each of those elements or as a small business owner you are… not going to win a lot.

I love creating an advanced segment with just the people who buy twice the average order size. I call them the Whales. Look at sources, locations, product bundles purchased, keywords and campaigns and all that to learn where/how you can find more Whales.

Where is it: Standard metric in all analytics tools. Remember to look at both the rate and the raw number of conversions for context. People make silly decisions when they don't do that. That's it!

You are a small sized business and these four simple key performance indicators will literally rock your world as soon as you start measuring them. Cost Per Acquisition. Bounce Rate. Checkout Abandonment Rate. Macro Conversion Rate. Don't look at any other metric until you feel you've mastered them.

Tip: If you've hired the right analytics talent/consultant to help you, they'll be measuring these fabulous four.

Best Metrics / KPIs for Medium Sized Business Websites

What if you are a medium sized business? What key performance indicators are optimal for you? First you are going to measure the KPIs mentioned above. But because you are running a bigger and more complex business you'll also measure…

Acquisition:

CPA

+ Click-through Rate

While CPA is a macro metric about your campaign's bottom-line performance, Click-thru Rate (CTR) is a deeper dive into analyzing the creativity and relevance of your affiliate deals / search listing / blinky banner ads.

In the context of Search (Paid or Organic) the text in your ads, the number at which your listing is ranked, the match between the user query and your ad's intent all help you receive a higher CTR. And if someone comes to your site (and does not bounce!) then you get an opportunity to convince them of your product or service's glory.

Small tweaks to the subject line of your email campaigns can have dramatic improvement in CTR. Recency and Frequency capping of your display remarketing campaigns can have a huge impact. Changing demographic targeting options in your Facebook ads can work wonders. Etc., etc., etc.

Put another way… CTR helps you understand if you showed at the right place for your first date. Are you dressed ok. And if your are smiling the right smile. Helpful to know, right?

Where is it:

Everywhere. Start at a campaign level. Drill down to individual creatives. Kill badness. Promote goodness. Rinse. Repeat.

Behavior:

Bounce Rate

Checkout Abandonment Rate

+ Page Depth

A very tiny percentage of visitors to your site will see more than a couple pages. That's the internet for you. As you improve the user experience, information architecture and relevancy of content on your site, it is important to keep an eye not on the rather useless metric of Average Page

Views per Visit or Average Time on Site but rather on the distribution of page depth. Here's how that picture might look like (from a post I wrote in July 2006!)…

From the deep detail reported by your web analytics tool you can choose to aggregate into buckets you most care about (like mine above). Categorizing the visits into Abandoners, Flirts, Browsers, One-off-Wonders, Loyalists will dramatically change your view of content consumption. Over time as you move to deeper consumption you'll see direct business rewards.

The above image emphasizes a sale/conversion at the end, but even if you are a content only website improving Page depth helps you as more pages equal (at the very minimum) more ad impressions!

Where is it: The final table will be in Excel. If you use Google Analytics the data you need is here: Audience > Behavior > Engagement > Page Depth tab. If you use WebTrends, Yahoo! Analytics, Coremetrics please click around to find the data. They all have it.

+ Loyalty (Count of Visits)

If Page Depth helps you optimize for a single session experience, Loyalty helps you optimize pan session behavior. Put another way… how good are you at getting the same person to visit your website multiple times? For ecommerce or non-ecommerce websites loyalty can mean the difference between life of survival and raking in profits like crazy.

First set a goal for what % of site Visits would you like to be from people who've visited more than x times. [Set a goal for x too. :)] For ecommerce websites use your Days to Conversion report (more on this metric below) to set your goal. For content sites perhaps mirror your content update schedule. If you are the New York Times and you update the website 24 times a day then should the average person be visiting the site at least 90 times per month?

Your BFF, as always, is analysis and not just reporting the metric. Create this simple segment in five seconds…

Apply to your keywords and campaigns and referring sources reports and identify which sources drive loyal traffic. Apply it to your content reports and figure out which content drives Loyalty (Sports? Op Ed? International? Cat Stories?).

Where is it: In every web analytics tool on the planet. If you use Google Analytics the data you need is here: Audience > Behavior > Frequency & Recency.

Outcomes:

Macro Conversion Rate.

+ Micro Conversion Rate

Pick your favorite benchmark and you'll notice that less than 2% of visitors convert. Focusing on just the Macro Conversion Rate means you don't care if you received any business value from the 98% that did not convert. I refuse to accept that uber-lameness.

Identify your Micro Conversions (/Goals) and obsess about the long and short term business value they deliver. You'll quickly realize the Economic Value they create for you is often far greater than the Revenue your Macro Conversion reports! And optimizing for that will ensure you win HUGE.

Where is it: In Google Analytics it is here: Conversions > Goals. Even if you are a content site the data is there. Details in the Goal URLs report. Setting up goals takes two minutes, setting goal values might take you a week (see measurement strategies here). If you use other tools, please check with your vendor.

+ Per Visit Goal Value

This Key Performance Indicator 1. helps you move beyond the obsession of focusing on the 2% (because it forces you to focus on Every Visit!) and 2. encourages you to create a business that users the web to deliver multiple outcomes to your visitors.

Every visitor will not convert, but every visitor will, hopefully, deliver some Economic Value. Looking at this metric helps you identify Goals that contribute higher value, and and understanding of simple things like where you should focus on. If Twitter delivers 87 Cents of Per Visit Goal Value and Google delivers 97 Cents then perhaps I want to keep focusing on my SEO strategies rather than following the advice of the Social Media Guru who's just informed me Search is dead.

Where is it: In pretty much every single report in every single web analytics tool. Click on the Goals tab.

That's it!

For a medium sized business we ended up with nine metrics. Seems about right if you are making more than five million dollars of economic value. They key difference from websites that are in the small business category is that we are going to shoot for multiple conversions, deeper site engagement and better analysis of acquisition efficiency.

THE SUBTLE ART OF LINKBAITING

January 27, 2009 40 Comments and 3 Reactions From Chrisbrogan.com

If you don't know the term, linkbaiting is when you write a blog post that causes people to generate links to it. For example, when I write a post like 27 Blogging Secrets to Power Your Community, I know that the post is at once useful, but also great linkbait. The thing is, I think it has to be a subtlety, not a hard press.

I read a great post somewhere (forget where) that said there are seven basic types of linkbait. I loved it so much that I wrote down all 7 types, but forgot to save the URL. So, whoever you are, sorry: you deserve credit.

7 BASIC TYPES OF LINKBAITING

1. Attack Hook – "Why I'm Not Following Chris Brogan on Twitter Anymore"
2. Humor Hook – Uncle! Why I Quit Following Chris Brogan (pretty good post)
3. Contrary Hook – Chris Brogan might be wrong.
4. Incentive Hook – Win an Hour with Chris Brogan (don't ever try this)

5.   News Hook – Chris Brogan is in Billings, Montana. What?
6.   Ego Hook – Why Chris Brogan is so Awesome
7.   Resource Hook – 100 Blog Posts Mentioning Chris Brogan

Again, that's not my list.
The thing is, it's got to be subtle. The people who try the hardest always come off like they're trying, and it's just a loud clunking sound from over here. I mean, your audience realizes you're doing linkbait. You know that, right?
And I'm talking to myself a bit here, too. I know the types of posts that I write that will draw links, and I use that tactic if I'm trying to grow my audience or shift the needle a bit. But if all I did was write posts that attempted to draw attention, it's like hanging out with the really loud kid in High School. You know what I mean?
As a blogging tactic, relying on linkbait to keep your content relevant feels like cooking fajitas every night. It might sizzle, but is it still magic? You might disagree.

How Much Time Should I Spend on Social Media?

From:
http://socialmediatoday.com/centralpawebster/403672/how-much-time-should-i-spend-social-media

This is a question I often receive during group presentations. And the answer to this question spans the globe. Here are just a few of the takes that those in the social media field have on this topic.

In the past few weeks, I've seen blogs touting the 18-minute social media strategy and the 20-minute social media professional.

Hubspot offers an e-book called, How to Monitor Social Media in 10 Minutes a Day.

Marijean Jaggers recently indicated that a social presence could take 20 hours a week or more!

Jeffrey Gitomer says in his book, Social Boom, to allocate one hour a day, once you get your presence set up.

I think Gitomer's approach is probably the most realistic, but it depends on a variety of factors.

Some spend hours a day on social media, but that doesn't mean they're effective. Others spend 15 or 20 minutes a day and are reaping the rewards. So, how much time do you really need?

As the variety of opinions mentioned above illustrates, I don't think any one person can fully answer that question for you, but I can offer a few tips that have helped me and might help you, too.

1. Think of social media as a networking event. You'll never get to talk to everyone, but you can talk to a few people and really get to know them. At the end of the day, it's still about building a relationship with other people.

2. Content is STILL king. It's not just a cliché. Content is what keeps people coming back. But this is also why the time estimates vary so much. Content could take minutes to hours to develop depending on the individual and the business. Think about what you know, what you're passionate about, and what you want to share. Lay it out in an editorial calendar, schedule blog posts, and use blog post nuggets as social media content.

3. Work smart. You don't have to be everywhere, you just have to be active on the channels that give you a return on your time investment. Rather than set up 10 cumbersome accounts, set up one or two that contain your target audience and commit to having consistent dialogue with your audience.

4. Find the fun in it. Just as important as working smart is finding what you enjoy in the social media arena. If you enjoy it, you're more likely to stick to it and spend time on it.

5. Make it a priority. With all the things competing for your attention, social media could be at the bottom of your list. If you add it to your planner – like going to the gym – you're more likely to do it and make it a part of your life.

Remember, simply setting up accounts doesn't count as time spent on social media. That's just the starting point. And, if you only have seven fans, you might need to think about how to increase your following before you set the time clock. After you've acquired a following, social media starts to become fun and rewarding.

You'll likely find that a social media is not just a scheduled hour of your day… It's something you weave into your day.

How are you spending time on social media? Have you found a way to streamline your time and get the most of your presence?

Wake Up SEOs, the New Google is Here

December 12th, 2011 - Posted by gfiorelli1 to Search Engine Trends
http://www.seomoz.org/blog/wake-up-seos-the-new-google-is-here

This post was originally in YOUmoz, and was promoted to the main blog because it provides great value and inter-est to our community. The author's views are entirely his or her own and may not reflect the views of SEOmoz, Inc.

I must admit that lately Google is the cause of my headaches.

No, not just because it decided I was not going to be not provided with useful information about my sites. And neither because it is changing practically every tool I got used since my first days as an SEO (Google Analytics, Webmaster Tools, Gmail…). And, honestly, not only because it released a ravenous Panda.

No, the real question that is causing my headaches is: *What the hell does Google want to go with all these changes?*

Let me start quoting the definition of SEO Google gives in its Guidelines:

> *Search engine optimization is about putting your site's best foot forward when it comes to visibility in search engines, but your ultimate consumers are your users, not search engines.*

Technical SEO still matters, a lot!

If you want to put your site's best foot forward and make it the most visible possible in search engines, then you have to be a master in technical SEO.

We all know that if we do not pay attention to the navigation architecture of our site, if we don't care about the on-page optimization, if we mess up with the rel="canonical" tag, the pagination and the faceted navigation of our web, and if we don't pay attention to the internal content dupli-cation, etc. etc., well, we are not going to go that far with Search.

Is all this obvious? Yes, it is. But people in our circle tend to pay attention just to the last bright shining object and forget what one of the basic pillars of our discipline is: make a site optimized to be visible in the search engines.

The next time you hear someone saying "Content is King" or "Social is the new link building", snap her face and ask her when it was the last time she logged in Google Webmaster Tools.

Finding and Connecting Your Brand to Customers

Go fix your site, make it indexable and solve all the technical problems it may have. Just after done that, you can start doing all the rest.

User is king

Technical SEO still matters, but that does not mean that it is synonym of SEO. So, if you hear someone affirming it, please snap her face too.

User and useful have the same root: use. And a user finds useful a website when it offers an answer to her needs, and if its use is easy and fast.

From the point of view that Google has of User, that means that a site to rank:

1. must be fast;
2. must have useful content and related to what it pretends to be about;
3. must be presented to Google so that it can understand the best it can what it is about.

The first point explains the emphasis Google gives to **site speed**, because it is really highly correlated to a better user experience.

The second is related to the quality of the content of a site, and it is substantially what **Panda** is all about. Panda, if we want to reduce it at its minimal terms, is the attempt by Google of cleaning its SERPs of any content it does not consider useful for the end users.

The third explains the Schema.org adoption and why Google (and the other Search Engines) are definitely moving to the Semantic Web: because it helps search engines organize the bazillion contents they index every second. And the most they understand really what is your content about, the better they will deliver it in the SERPs.

The decline of Link graph

We all know that just with on-site optimization we cannot win the SERPs war, and that we need links to our site to make it authoritative. But we all know how much the link graph can be gamed.

Even though we still have tons of reasons to complain with Google about the quality of SERPs, especially due to sites that ranks thanks to manipulative link building tactics, it is hard for me to believe that Google is doing nothing in order to counteract this situation. What I believe is that Google has decided to solve the problem not with patches but with a totally new kind of graph.

That does not mean that links are not needed anymore, not at all, as links related factors still represent (and will represent) a great portion of all the ranking factors, but other factors are now cooked in the ranking pot.

Be Social and become a trusted seed

In a Social-Caffeinated era, the faster way to understand if a content is popular is to check its "relative" popularity in the social media environment. I say "relative", because not all contents are the same and if a meme needs many tweets, +1 and likes/share to be considered more popular than others, it is not so for more niche kind of contents. **Combining social signals with the traditional link graph**, Google can understand the real popularity of a page.

The **problem**, as many are saying since almost one year, is that it is quite easy to spam in Social Media.

For this reason Google introduced the concepts of Author and Publisher and, even more important, Google linked them to the Google Profiles and is pushing Google Plus, which is not just another Social Media, but what Google aims to be in the future: a social search engine.

Rel="author" and **Rel="publisher"** are the solution Google is adopting in order to better control, within other things, the spam pollution of the SERPs.

If you are a blogger, you will be incentivized in marking your content with Author and link it to your G+ Profile, and as a Site, you are incentivized to create your G+ Business page and to promote it with a badge on you site that has the rel="publisher" in its code.

Trusted seeds are not anymore only sites, but can be also persons (i.e.: Rand or Danny Sullivan) or social facets of an entity… so, the closer I am in the Social Graph to those persons//entity the more trusted I am to Google eyes.

As we can see, Google is not trying to rely only on the link graph, as it is quite easy to game, but it is not simply adding the social signals to the link graph, because they too can be gamed. **What Google is doing is creating and refining a new graph that see cooperating Link graph, Social graph and Trust graph** and which is possibly harder to game. Because it can be gamed still, but – hopefully – needing so many efforts that it may become not-viable as a practice.

Wake up SEOs, the new Google is here

As a conclusion, let me borrow what [Larry Page](#) wrote on Google+ (bold is mine):

> *Our ultimate ambition is to transform the overall Google experience […] because we understand what you want and can deliver it instantly.*
>
> *This means baking identity and sharing into all of our products so that we build a real relationship with our users. **Sharing on the web will be like sharing in real life across all your stuff. You'll have better, more relevant search results** and ads.*
>
> *Think about it this way … last quarter, we've shipped the +, and now we're going to ship the Google part.*

I think that it says it all and what we have lived a year now is explained clearly by the Larry Page words.

What can we do as SEOs? Evolve, because SEO is not dieing, but SEOs can if they don't assume that winter - oops - the change of Google is coming.

Books to Put on Your Reading List

Made to Stick- Chip & Dan Heath

We are all Weird- Seth Godin

Content Rules- CC. Chapman & Ann Handley

The Knack- Norm Brodsky from Inc. Magazine

Blogs and Podcasts to Put on Your Media List

Marketing Over Coffee- Chris Penn & John Wall

Occams's Razor by Avinash Kaushik

Six Pixels of Separation- Mitch Joel

Chris Brogan- Chris brogan.com

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