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Main Street 2.0: A Guide To Online And Social Media Marketing For Small Business Through The Use Of Online Analytics And Content Marketing Strategies

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The Use of Online Analytics and Content Marketing Strategies

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ABSTRACT

This project is intended to serve as a guidebook for small businesses interested in developing digital marketing strategies to reach prospective and existing customers online. The guide will serve three main functions. The first is to provide a review of literature on integrated marketing communications, relationship marketing and content marketing to use as a foundation for planning online communications. Business owner interviews will also provide various perspectives to small business online marketing. The second is to provide instruction on evaluating existing website data to gain customer insight in planning communications. The third is a network structure for distributing content through multiple online platforms. The guidebook will assess data from small businesses in a university community as well as provide suggestions for developing an efficient and effective content distribution model using open-source content management tools.

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CHAPTER I:

INTRODUCTION

THE STATE OF SMALL BUSINESS MARKETING

Small businesses play an important role in the U.S. economy. While small business growth has declined in recent years due to the recession, small businesses have accounted for slightly more than half of all new jobs created in the last three quarters of 2010 (*Small Business Share of Economy, Job Growth Shrinks - BusinessWeek*, n.d.). According to a 2010 report from the Small Business Association (SBA), small businesses' share of the overall U.S. economic output has dropped from 50 percent in 2004 to 44 percent in 2010 (*Office of Advocacy - Research Issues - the Role of Small Business in Economic Development of the United States: From the End of the Korean War (1953) to the Present | SBA.gov*, n.d.).

As all businesses attempt to recover from the recent recession, there is an opportunity to investigate new methods of growth, which include expanding their efforts with the utilization of online marketing methods to reach new customers. However, small businesses appear to be slow in embracing online channels as an outlet to promote their goods and services. According to a recent survey (n=550) conducted by the Boston Consulting Group, a global management and business strategy firm, only three percent of the advertising budgets for small businesses are used for online channels (*Bcg.perspectives - Unlocking the Digital-Marketing Potential of Small Businesses*, n.d.).

Historically, small business owners have relied on local media or agency representatives to assist them in developing marketing messages. A business owner could call their advertising representative, purchase ad space in the local newspaper or yellow pages, or buy airtime on a radio or television station. The explosive growth of online media has made marketing for small business problematic (*Drew Hendricks: A Look at the Struggle of Small Businesses on the Internet,* n.d.). The onslaught of new technology combined with a new environment of informed consumers can present a challenge to any size organization.

The need for small businesses to attract new customers is important. The struggling economy has only complicated the life of a small business owner. Business owners need to know the importance of online and social media marketing, but an addition to their challenge is the time needed to devote to these new technologies, in addition to doing all the things necessary to keeping their business operational. Research conducted by Vertical Response Marketing revealed that while 63 percent of small business owners spend between 1-5 hours per week on social media marketing, one-third of all owners surveyed would like to spend less time on it (*Small Businesses Don't Have Time for Social Media -- and Don't Track Results - Forbes,* n.d.).

The task of balancing and managing a business, as well as attempting to reach potential customers through new media channels, can be difficult for any organization. One small business owner of an in-home animal care and mobile pet grooming service understands these challenges. She has been in business since 2009 and has seen the impact online marketing has on new customers. Kellie Owens, owner of Homeward Bound, Inc., relies upon digital communication outlets to generate new business and to continue relationships with existing customers.

"Our biggest challenge is tracking the impact of our online and social media marketing efforts" (K. Owens, personal communication, March 6, 2013).

Owens believes her business could benefit from a dedicated staff member to perform online marketing duties.

Other business owners, such as online retailers, have challenges with online marketing. Charlie Hohorst, owner of CajunGrocer.com, an online retailer based in Lafayette, LA., founded in 1999 that ships Cajun and Creole cuisine nationwide, feels the social media return on investment is the biggest challenge for his business.

"The biggest hurdle is cost. Basically you want to manage your online budget vs. cost to conversion" (C. Hohorst, personal communication, March 6, 2013).

While Hohorst initially used offline marketing tactics when he launched CajunGrocer.com, he was able to quickly enter the digital realm of online marketing. Hohorst cites the benefit of tracking and measuring as a key to online marketing success.

"The beautiful side of online marketing is that you can measure every click, click through, site visit vs. conversions. You know where your marketing dollars are spent, down to the penny" (C. Hohorst, personal communication, March 6, 2013).

Budget, time and ROI are challenges any organization faces when dedicating resources to marketing efforts. There are also opportunities for businesses to use online channels to increase revenue through business expansion. Scott Caradine, owner of Proud Larry's, a restaurant and music venue opened in 1993 in Oxford, MS, has used new technologies that not only promote his business, but also expand his brand through merchandising and online event ticketing. Caradine cites lack of time for online marketing as a reason he does not maintain it as he should, but knows it is necessary in today's wired society.

"In the food service business, quality and service are crucial to continued success. Today, people who eat in your restaurant are not only going to tell their friends, but are going to tell the

world on networks like Facebook, Twitter and Yelp. It is important for Proud Larry's to monitor reviews, comments and brand reputation online" (S. Caradine, personal communication, March 7, 2013).

The goal of this guide is to provide insight into the vastly changing landscape of business marketing. Before small business owners can understand this new landscape of a modern day consumer-focused setting, they must understand the changes in marketing as a discipline over the past decade. This guidebook will deliver a review of literature aimed at aiding small business owners with an understanding of the shift from promotional marketing through the modern day relationship and content marketing concepts, with an emphasis on customer data and technology as the core to an integrated marketing approach. This historical overview will attempt to make small business owners recognize the methods of integrated marketing communications (IMC) and how they have evolved through the use of technology and customer-driven data, which allow marketers to use these tools when developing a small business marketing communications strategy.

The following sections are written to provide an overview of how marketing has and is evolving from an offline to online environment. The first section provides an historical overview of the discipline of integrated marketing communications and the evolution of IMC to an online relationship-based marketing model. The use of customer data and content marketing through multiple online channels drives continual brand recognition across Internet media channels.

Many small business owners have taken the initial steps by developing a website or Facebook page, but don't monitor visitors to the site or update the content on a regular basis. The data section will offer some suggestions for methods on how small business owners could use

free or low-cost software and online tools to audit their current online presence, as well as use this data to shape how they engage with their prospective or current customers.

The section on building the online environment incorporates a 360-degree approach to using multiple online networks such as Facebook and Twitter as channels, which drive page visitors to the core business website. This site serves as the main digital identity of a business. The environment will present some suggested techniques for small business owners to use as a foundation for developing engaging and continuous content in attempts to grow website visitors and deliver informative content with a call to action.

CHAPTER II:

LITERATURE REVIEW

For the purpose of this project it is necessary to provide an overview of marketing communications through the past few decades. A history of IMC will provide the reader with a perspective on how integrated marketing communications emerged to become a foundation for newer shifts toward relationship marketing communications and engagement strategies. Exploration of the explosive growth of online communications networks and the role they play in the development of new marketing disciplines is also necessary. Advancements in online technology have made gather and analyzing customer data more accessible to any size organization. This review of literature will unveil the shift from what is considered a traditional promotional outbound method of marketing communications to an inbound approach of a relationship-based method rooted in the fundamental principles of integrated marketing communications.

THE EVOLUTION OF INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

The American Marketing Association provides the following definition for marketing:

Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for

creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that

have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large

(*Dictionary*, n.d.).

Marketing relates back to ancient concepts of selling goods and services, but was not refined into a function of sales until the late nineteenth century when mass communication and

national markets caused manufacturers to recognize advertising as a valued supplement to the sales process (Kotler & Mindak, 1978).

The Four Ps theory was the basis for marketing practice and education with no focus on the customer, only the "siloed" internal orientation of product management, pricing, distribution and advertising or promotion. According to Schultz (2004), for forty years, the Four Ps theory was deemed successful if all four Ps were implemented correctly, then this would create business growth (Schultz & Schultz, 2004).

Marketing as it is known and taught today was introduced in 1960 with the model known as the marketing mix (Grönroos, 1994). Borden's "marketing mix" concept described many of the elements businesses should consider when developing a marketing campaign (Borden, 1964). His marketing mix concept would later be condensed into four categories known as "The Four Ps" or product, price, place and promotion (Schultz, Tannenbaum, & Lauterborn, 1994).

The Four Ps, or marketing mix, would not be challenged by new theories for many years. Advertising agencies often used the power of positive thinking and marketers often viewed their audience as "mindless," developing advertising for the masses and shaping it around the perceived notion of American life on 1960s television (Schultz & Schultz, 2004).

According to Schultz (2004), during the era of mass marketing, the focus of advertising or marketing communications was centered on the product, not the consumer (Schultz & Schultz, 2004). Mass marketing fostered the continuation of the marketing mix paradigm until the 1980s, when the first database that allowed businesses to monitor their activities was developed at Harvard University. Steinbock (2000) supports the use of databases citing how development of computer based data management would create a shift in marketing communications from a

product centric model to a customer centric focused model (Steinbock, 2000). This model would emerge in the late 1980s and be known as integrated marketing communications.

Haney (1920) argues "integration in marketing," meaning the consolidation of marketing stages (Haney, 1920). Haney's concept approached integration from an advertising and communications perspective through segmentation of advertising messages to retailers by branding similar products, therefore Haney's concept was not an integrated marketing platform as it approached product integration through branding, not integration of messaging (1920).

In 1989, faculty at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism joined members of the American Association of Advertising Agencies (the 4As) to develop a task force that set out to develop a framework for integrated marketing communications. The task force first attempted to create a definition of integrated marketing communications (IMC). The group established the following definition for IMC:

> Integrated marketing communications: A concept of marketing communications planning that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication (Schultz, 1993).

Schultz and other faculty were also working on a curriculum in IMC at Medill and they took a slightly different view than the joint task force of 4A members. The Medill team's approach initially focused on planning marketing communications from the prospect or customer's perspective (1993). With a customer-focused idea in mind, the Medill faculty proposes a variation on the meaning of IMC:

> IMC is the process of developing and implementing various forms of persuasive communications programs with customers and

prospects over time. The goal of IMC is to influence or directly

affect the behavior of the selected communications audience

(Schultz, 1993).

Skeptics were quick to criticize the efforts of Schultz. One critic, Neil Brown, writes of a

need for IMC strategy or curriculum to ultimately leverage and synergize direct marketing

("Redefine Integrated Marketing Communications, Letter to the Editor," 1993). Like any new

emerging schemes of philosophy, the introduction to the IMC model requires extensive debate

among thought leaders, including both academics and practitioners, in order to form a consensus.

Hutton believes IMC is a false issue, arguing IMC is not a new concept, but had been in practice

for years He also feels the need for integrated marketing and integrated communications within

organizations, but not integrated marketing communications (Hutton, 1996).

Koetler and Mindak (1978) also question the boundaries between public relations and

marketing communications. They view public relations and marketing as separate, but equal

functions, where as public relations "produced goodwill to the company's publics, it could not

interfere with marketing, or the profit making arm of an organization" (Kotler & Mindak, 1978).

Hutton (1996) went slightly further stating marketing was shifting to a "public relations

perspective" and public relations should lead the IMC debate (Hutton, 1996).

According to Steinbeck (2000), the new paradigm of integrated marketing

communications brought an end to the era of "traditional mass marketing" in the late 1980s

(Steinbock, 2000). He is convinced an increase in technology and the information revolution

were to blame (2000). Some advertising practitioners were skeptical of Schultz's new theory of

marketing communications (Hutton, 1996). Hutton (1996) debates the foundation behind IMC is

not new and has been practiced in marketing communications for decades, even centuries (Hutton, 1996).

The concept and practices of IMC did not threaten traditional advertising agencies until 1993 (1996). Schultz (1994) believes one of the necessary changes to implementing IMC was re-training of marketing communicators. According to Schultz (1994), in order for "IMC to take hold, old assumptions must exit" (Schultz & Schultz, 2004). These old assumptions stem from the traditional advertising approach of developing messaging targeted at a mass audience, rather than a more strategic approach of using customer data to drive the development of messaging (2004). Holm (2006) supports this by stating advertising is traditionally produced by art directors, writers and account executives, many of who are not versed in the "strategic and tactical" realm necessary for integrated communication (Holm, 2006). In order for integration to take place, this is one obstacle marketers need to overcome in order to embrace IMC as the new marketing paradigm.

The road to an acceptance of integration as the new standard in marketing requires many change-drivers. One of these was the use of technology to collect data about consumers. Technology is one of the driving forces behind IMC (2006). The development of sophisticated databases in the 1980s allows for businesses to key in on another important driver of a good IMC strategy, the consumer. According to Steinbock, technology and the ability to collect and segment customer data was one of the keys to the shift from mass marketing to IMC (Steinbock, 2000). Since the early 1990s, the media landscape and marketing have been fundamentally altered with the emergence of information technology and the "dominant underlying factor" in the foundation of IMC as a standard framework for communication integration (Holm, 2006).

A second shift toward the acceptance of IMC was the use of technology to gain insight from the customer. Consumer behavior and data play a large role in effective integration. Using technology, marketers can easily monitor transaction data, customer loyalty, almost any component of the relationship between the business and the consumer (Schultz et al., 1994). Holm agrees, stating the advancement in technology to develop and distribute integrated messaging relates to the "individualization of consumption" (Holm, 2006).

Customer behavior can be monitored with the use of data, and has evolved since the 1990s. Based on these scans, the IMC process of using this data to monitor campaign activity or aid in developing further communication can exist. Schultz and Kitchen feel IMC is "contingent on the extensive use of behavioral database" to aid in organizational learning (Schultz & Kitchen, 1997).

According to Schultz and Schultz (2004), a standard definition of integrated marketing communications emerged during a best- practice benchmark study conducted in 1997 by the American Productivity and Quality Center (APQC). The group used the following definition:

> Integrated marketing communications is a strategic business
>
> process used to plan, develop, execute, and evaluate coordinated,
>
> measureable, persuasive brand communication programs over time
>
> with consumers, customers, prospects, and other targeted, relevant
>
> external and internal audiences (Schultz & Schultz, 2004).

Based on this definition, the APQC then created a framework for the four stages developing IMC within an organization. The first stage of development is tactical coordination, which is the entry point for many organizations. The second stage focuses on the scope of marketing communications. The third is the application of information technology to identify

marketing message impacts on customers. The fourth stage, or highest level of integration, is financial and strategic integration (2004).

The preceding text has provided a historical overview of the development of IMC from a theoretical perspective in efforts to give the reader background on what is considered today the norm of marketing communications in the present day (Kitchen, Brignell, Li, & Jones, 2004). While this may be true for larger organizations, there is also a need for integration among smaller organizations. According to Gabrielli and Baldoni (2010), research in integration among small businesses is lacking (Gabrielli & Balboni, 2010). According to the Small Business Administration, a general definition of small business is an organization having fewer than 500 employees (*What Is a Small Business? What You Need to Know and Why | SBA.gov*, n.d.).

Research also shows of barriers encountered by small and medium sized enterprises when it comes to implementing IMC practices. Gilmore, et. al found cost of implementing and maintenance of information technology associated with integrating to be one of the barriers preventing SMEs to implement and IMC program (Gilmore, Gallagher, & Henry, 2007). Since modern day IMC programs rely heavily on digital platforms, knowledge of technology and on-going training are also factors prohibiting many small businesses from entering the modern era of marketing communications (2007). These barriers justify the need for this project to provide a scaled down approach of IMC that can be managed by small business owners and managers without the complexities of large organizational IMC strategies.

RELATIONSHIP MARKETING AND SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

While IMC is a growing model for marketing communications there is another developing paradigm shaping marketing communications known as relationship marketing. Anderson believes communication is the "fundamental aspect of relationship development"

(Andersen, 2001). This supports Finne and Grönroos' suggestion that relationship marketing presents a perspective on IMC that is more "consumer-centric" (Finne & Grönroos, 2009). In their research they present the following definition for relationship marketing communication:

> Relationship communication is any type of marketing communication that influences the receiver's long-term commitment to the sender by facilitating meaning creation through integration with the receiver's time and situational context. The time context refers to the receiver's perception of the history and envisioned future of his/her relationship with the sender. The situational context refers to other elements internal or external to the receiver (2009).

This relationship perspective shifts the focus toward customer behavior and the relationship between the distributor of the message and the receiver. Thrassou and Vrontis (2009) believe this relationship is important as the facilitation of meaning connects on a social and cultural level (Thrassou & Vrontis, 2009). Combined with the principle idea of integrating messaging in IMC by using methods to discover customer insight using technology and data, marketing messages can be designed to build a relationship between the business and customer. Patsioura, et. al (2008) state this is seen in how Internet advertising offers a method of building these relationships by allowing customer feedback through surveys or customer comments to shape messaging based on prospect or purchaser perspectives of a brand (Patsioura, Vlachopoulou, & Malama, n.d.).

Relationship marketing is also focused on attracting new customers, but according to Zineldin and Philpson (2007). Relationship marketing emphasizes "developing, maintaining and

enhancing customer relationships over the customer life cycle" (Zineldin & Philipson, 2007). Chen (2001) supports this, stating it is prevalent today through the wide variety of online channels available for both marketers and consumers to monitor or voice opinions on products and services.

An array of digital communication platforms gives consumers a voice to "publicize their personal evaluations of purchased products and thus facilitate word-of-mouth communication" (Chen, Fay, & Wang, 2011). Online customer reviews on sites such as Amazon.com provide marketers a means to monitor their products and brands and collect actual feedback to use in refining messages or even products. A 2012 Local Consumer Review Survey conduced by the search optimization website searchengineland.com shows that 52 percent of consumers were likely to use a local business base if they have positive reviews and that 72 percent of respondents trust online business reviews ("Local Consumer Review Survey," n.d.).

The advances in technology over the past few years, mainly the growth of social media, have created a shift in IMC towards relationship marketing and what Spiller et al., call interactive IMC (Spiller, Tuten, & Carpenter, 2011). They define social media as anytime, anywhere communication built around online and mobile networks (2011). Lucenko and Nørgaard (2012) confirm this in their theoretical analysis of the customer-centric approach to IMC. Their discovery of social media use as related to three theoretical frameworks create an approach to "universal truth" of a new hybrid promotional element that bring into line IMC concepts with changes in customer media behavior (Lucenko & Nørgaard, n.d.).

Social media use has grown significantly in the past five years, an average of 443 percent for the top six social networks (*Social Media Growth 2006 to 2011 | D. Steven White,* n.d.). This has created what Evans (2012) calls a "marketing dilemma" causing marketers to compete not

only with each other, but tech savvy consumers who seek or provide purchasing advice through electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) when researching or review products and services (Evans, 2012). eWOM is defined as: "any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet" (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004). Hening-Thurau, et al. (2004) create a link between online use and relationship marketing in their findings on eWOM as an indicator of consumer motives for publishing online comments or product reviews. Their findings also suggest support for platform developers to create campaigns that appeal to eWOM motives of online consumers (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Litvin, et al. debate the effect of online anonymity as a possible deterrent to the use of eWOM due to the potential of communicators providing misleading information (Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008).

Additional research into eWOM in the hospitality sector suggests the use of e-mail as a relationship building communications tool for marketers to create an emotional connection with prospective customers (2008). Ellis-Chadwick and Doherty (2011) suggest personalization of e-mail marketing as important and managers interviewed in their research among online retailers expect personalization to be more effective, but it is dependent on the quality of customer data to ensure accurate personalization (Ellis-Chadwick & Doherty, 2011).

The next sections provide a guide for small business owners to use in efforts to audit their existing online environment through various data analysis software platforms. After data monitoring, a section on the structure of a 360-degree online environment as well as suggested content development strategies is provided.

CHAPTER III:

GUIDE TO ONLINE AND SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

ONLINE AND CUSTOMER DATA

The incredible growth in social network usage creates a new frontier for smaller

organizations to explore when it comes to communicating with customers. The key to an IMC

approach using a "customer-oriented culture" within an organization and knowing how available

data can be used in "understanding customers and prospects" (Schultz & Schultz, 2004).

According to Schultz and Schultz (2004), a data audit is necessary for understanding the current

customer landscape (Schultz & Schultz, 2004). Fully understanding customer behavior in the

digital space is a challenge for integrated marketing communications. Mulhern (2009) believes in

the digital environment, continuous monitoring of customer insight as a "natural and complete"

method for processing and modifying marketing communications campaigns (Mulhern, 2009)

The biggest shift in an integrated, relationship and content-based marketing

communication has been the revolution and use of new technology and access to a variety of

online and customer data over the past twenty years. Some scholars have compared the Internet

with the creation of the electrical grid and the industrial revolution (2009). Gathering precise

measurements is now available, as online consumer involvement has grown year by year. The

introduction of databases to monitor purchasing history, gain customer feedback and even

determine an online or mobile user's location, only make it easier for marketers to pinpoint their

target audience. This section will provide the reader with a look at some of the measurement

tools and methods for interpreting the data gathered from both online and social networks.

Important insights can be gained by spotting trends in web browsing behavior as well as the frequency and types of content online prospects provide to enlighten small business owners when developing their marketing messages. To gain perspective into current and prospective customers, the first point of measurement is the business website through the use of software such as Google Analytics. In this section the author will provide an overview of four key measurements for small business owners to use in evaluating website visitors. The first is the number of website visitors. The second is the demographic information provided by analytics software. The third is the traffic referral source information. The fourth is content and how auditing a business website's content can show a business owner what pages receive the most visits and how the bounce rate, or as Google defines it, the "percentage of visits that go only one page before exiting a site" can provide insight into information your web environment is providing to prospective customers. (*Bounce Rate - Analytics Help,* n.d.).

The second set of data collection tools that will be discussed is Facebook Insights. In less than ten years Facebook has become the largest social networking site. Facebook has roughly 800 million registered users and for some small business owners is often viewed as a more important tool in online marketing than the business website. Facebook business pages allow users of the social network to "like" a business or organization's page and then receive updates, photos, and other posts from the business in the user's news feed or timeline. Once a user likes a business page then that user is now a part of the business's insights analytics. From the Facebook Insights dashboard, a small business owner can gather more precise data on their page "fans" or prospects. Many of the metrics provided by Facebook Insights dig even deeper into a prospect or customer than Google Analytics does for a web visitor. Facebook provides key indicators for marketing communicators such as geographic location, age, gender, sources of likes and many

other metrics which go beyond the scope of this section. For the purpose of this project, there will be an overview of sample data a small business owner can tap into to get a measurement of who is interacting with their Facebook page. Facebook Insights also provides a means to measure the performance of content generated by a business on their page. By glancing at the key indicators, marketers can see what type of content is most popular, or viral. Marketers can also see how the use of the social web reaches beyond the users who simply like a page. The reach metric will show how fans friends relate to a business page. One interesting part of the structure of Facebook is the ability to extend your message by allowing those users who like your page to share content, therefore expanding the reach of the message to all of their friends even if those friends are not fans of a business's page.

Finally, in this section, readers will gain a broad overview of other analytics software services available and how these tools can assist small business marketers in measuring their business on other social networks such as Twitter and Instagram. Information about other new technologies will be addressed such as the use of URL shortening services to assist small businesses with methods to monitor web content from a variety of networks.

GOOGLE ANALYTICS

Google Analytics (Gabrielli & Balboni, 2010) has become the leading website data analysis tool for many web publishers, marketers and small business owners. In *Advanced Web Metrics With Google Analytics,* author Brian Clifton calls web analytics a "thermometer for your website" (Clifton, 2012). Analytics provide a method for businesses to track the effectiveness of online marketing and search engine optimization techniques. The web tracking service developed by Google uses various algorithms to provide detailed measurement of website traffic

simply by installing a small bit of computer code into pages of a website. For small business

owners, one of the best features of Google Analytics is the availability of a free service, provided

the website has under 10 million visits per month or 200,000 visits per day. Google Analytics'

free data tools provide users with a visual representation of website traffic through the use of

dashboards. A dashboard is the term used for a web page providing a user interface of data

elements in an easy to read format. (*What Is Dashboard? - Definition From WhatIs.com*, n.d.)

Many dashboards, such as Google Analytics offer users the ability to customize a variety of web

content into a page layout specific to the users relevant content. This provides an easy to access

overview of relevant statistics from a business website allowing a marketer to quickly view

website metrics pertinent to specific goals or online ad campaigns.

Google Analytics can be installed in a matter of minutes by even the most novice web

developer. By creating an account with the Google Analytics service specific to your website

domain, for example www.mywebsite.com, the user will receive a unique identifier and the

necessary HTML code needed to integrate Google Analytics data collection into the business's

website. By inserting the provided code into each page of the site or a single page, depending on

the website structure, Google Analytics automated service will now scan each page of the

website when it is accessed by viewers. It can take up to 24 hours for the data to appear in the

Google Analytics account dashboard.

Google Analytics does not provide real-time web statistics and Google updates web

metrics at 12:00 UTC, but they have been testing real-time reporting in beta platforms. For the

purposes of data measurement on a small business website, not providing online commerce,

Google Analytics is an excellent tool to use for the small business website manager. For a free

tool, Google Analytics reporting should provide sufficient website data to gauge the online traffic for small business (*Introduction to Google Analytics - Analytics Help,* n.d.).

Once a user has established an account and installed the Google Analytics code it is time to take a look at the key metrics small business owners can view to analyze their business website. To view the dashboard simply visit http://www.google.com/analytics and sign-in with the appropriate user credentials associated with the website you have registered. A Google Analytics account also allows for users to add multiple web domain names for measuring. For example, if a business registers a separate website domain, such as www.myspecialwebsite.com perhaps for a specific campaign or project then data from this domain can collected separately from another registered domain.

When a user logs into the analytics page and clicks on the appropriate domain to view the users will be taken to the audience overview page. Figure 1 shows an example of the Google Analytics Audience Overview page. This is the default dashboard in Google Analytics, though as a user becomes more familiar they may customize the default page to present a dashboard of metrics applicable to specific data they would like to analyze. Besides being an excellent free resource for small business owners, Google Analytics data can be exported to a variety of formats to use in reports or to combine with other data in spreadsheet programs or more sophisticated data analysis packages.

At first glance, the Google dashboard may seem overwhelming, but it is designed to provide the user with an easy to navigate menu on the left column (see fig. 1). The menu options for data are divided into eight main menus. For the purpose of this project the Audience, Traffic Source and Content menus will be discussed.

To begin an audit of a business website's current data it is necessary to look at some of the metrics in which a small business could gather to evaluate traffic to the website. While the data provided can aid in marketing communications decision making, each business's goals may differ so for this project no specific recommendations will be provided.

The first metric a small business owner should review is the number of visits to the website. This can be viewed in the graph and in the grey bar of the audience overview page. Figure 2 shows a chart of page visits to the website over a 30 day period. The default setting for data in Google Analytics is a 30 day period from the last complete data cycle, however the display range can be decreased or increased based on the overall data collection period. (*Introduction to Google Analytics - Analytics Help*, n.d.).

In the example (fig 2) the total website visits can be viewed as 3,743 visitors during the measurement period. It should be noted; Google Analytics provides both total visitor information as well as unique visitor data. According to Google's documentation on calculating visitors against unique visitors is that visitors may account for one unique visit to a web page, but access several pages during their session. Google calculates a session as any web page access then resets that visitor after a 30-minute period of activity or at midnight (*How Visits Are Calculated in Analytics - Analytics Help*, n.d.). While the overview provides a quick snapshot into the volume of website traffic, Google Analytics provides users the ability to "drill down" in the available data to get more specific insight from website data. Other audience or web visitor data of importance to small business marketing is the demographic section of the audience menu. The Demographics page provides a location report through a visual map representing website visitor location based on Internet Protocol mapping (*Location - Analytics Help*, n.d.).

Figure 1 – Google Analytics Audience Overview
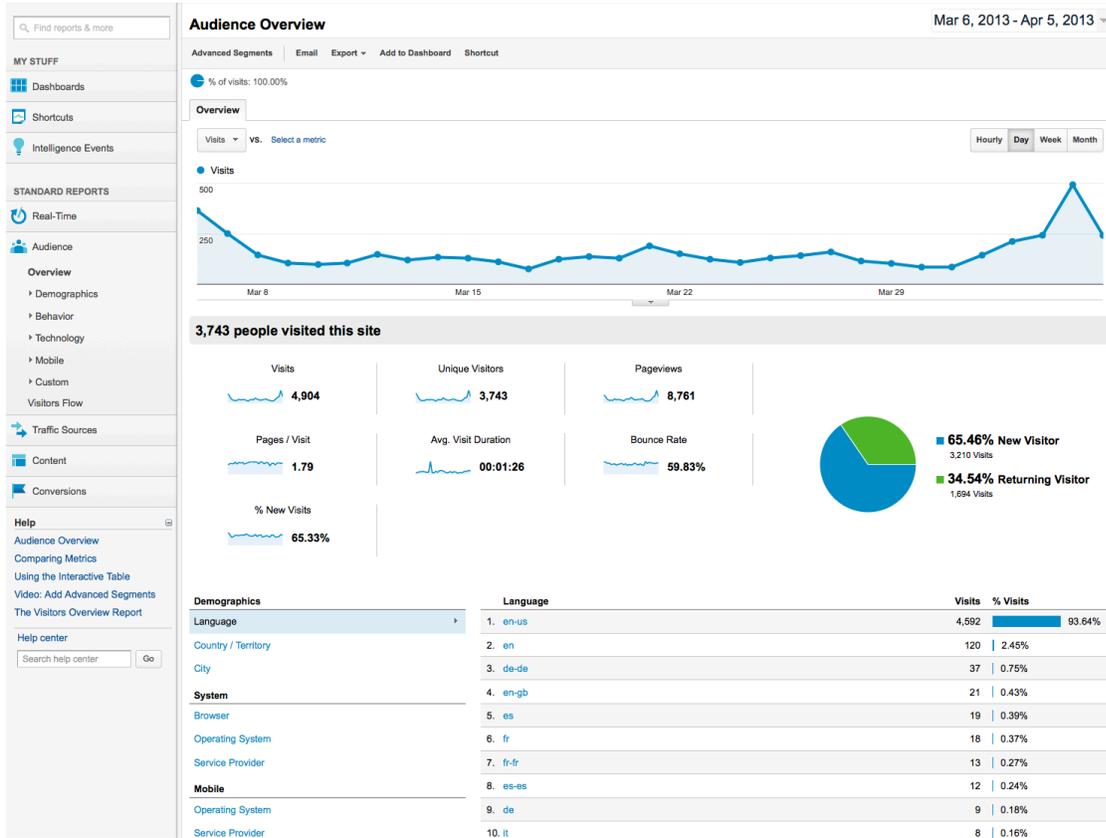
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The Location Report provides a clickable map of the world and the analytics users can then click on various countries, regions or states to pinpoint the source of visitor data. The Google Analytics map shades locations from light green for less web traffic to a darker green, indicating heavier web traffic sources. Location data can be valuable to determine areas where an advertiser could increase marketing communications to increase traffic from a specific city or state. Location data is also relevant for targeting different messages for different geographic

areas if a business were using online advertising as a method to drive traffic to the business website.

Figure 2. Google Analytics Visitor Overview
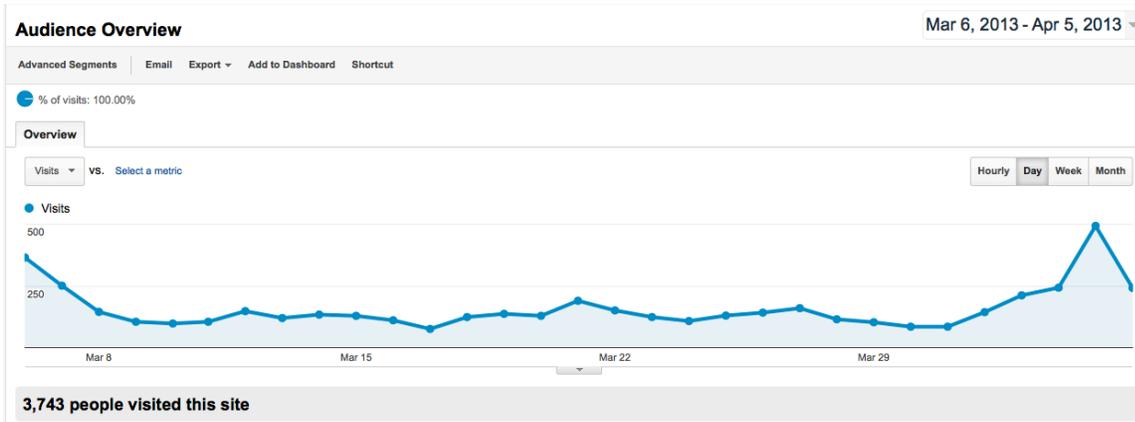
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Another key metric for small business owners to analyze is source or referral data. Traffic source data provides the web marketing with an in-depth look at the variety of ways users arrived at your business website. There are four main source metrics an analytics user can investigate. The first is direct traffic. This displays the volume of users who directly accessed the business website either through typing the domain name into their browser, from a previously bookmarked page, or even offline methods such as a special web address that may have been created as a part of a marketing campaign.

The second source category for traffic is referral sources. Referral source data provides a web marketer or small business owner viewing analytics to see what external websites referred a web user to your website. Various types of links such as paid banner advertising, content links in blog articles, or social media posts from any online user. Referrals can be a critical component in

a 360-degree marketing plan, discussed later in a later guide. The referral data can give marketing communicators a list of top referral networks such as facebook.com or a blog site where the business may be mentioned in an online article. Referral data can indicate what external sites are driving traffic to your business site. Referral data can be an excellent indicator of online marketing effectiveness. An example of a positive indicator might be posting a message on a micro-blogging site, such as Twitter, with an accompanying link to a blog article on your website and noticing a large number of referral traffic in your Google Analytics referral dashboard from twitter.com.

The third source category for monitoring website traffic is search. Search referral information is provided as either organic or paid. Organic search is defined as the keywords or search word a user enters into a search engine field and the corresponding search results for those keywords provide a link to your business website. If the user then clicks to your site, Google Analytics will capture the search term and associate it as an organic search referral (*Search Term Exlusions - Analytics Help,* n.d.). Google Analytics organic referral page will provide a list of terms that referred users to a page on your website as well as the number of times a specific search term connected a user to your website. Paid search referral is used in conjunction with traffic referred to your website based on purchased key terms or what Google refers to as Ad-Words. Discussion on paid search is beyond the scope of this guide, but is a viable option for businesses who would consider allocating marketing budget resources to purchasing specific terms to improve search rankings of their business website.

Finally the fourth section within Google Analytics that can benefit small business marketers is the Content section. The content dashboard is similar to the others within GA. It provides key page metrics to show users what pages of a business website are receiving the most

views, whether it be the main home page of a website or the latest blog entry. The content section will also show landing pages, or the page a user viewed, whether it is from an organic search or a specific link shared by a friend on a social network or in an email. Exit page data is also provided to give understanding of pages web visitors view before they move offline or to another website. If your business website has an on-site search function where users could search for information on products or other information, these analytics will be available in the site search sub-section of the content section. This is useful to allow marketers access to often searched terms on the business website and these terms could be used within page content to provide easier access to information.

While this section on analytics provides a brief and simplified view of the many data resources Google Analytics can provide to small businesses, owners attempting to fine-tune their online marketing efforts the intent is to provide the reader with an introduction to how access their website data within Google Analytics. Compared to traditional advertising measurement options such as print and broadcast, online metrics can be a useful tool in pinpointing how online messaging is working to bring visitors to your business website. The analytics areas covered in this section will hopefully encourage small business marketers to use powerful web browsing data collection tools like Google Analytics to assist in building effective online marketing campaigns. By beginning with a current audit of website traffic, business owners can gain new knowledge into the current state of their website and use some of the key metrics provided by Google Analytics to assist in making marketing communication decisions.

Many of the metrics provided in the Google Analytics dashboards can be customized and combined to do an even more in-depth analysis of web traffic. For instance, data from geographic metrics can be combined with content data to see if there are any specific patterns to

how website visitors from specific areas are accessing certain pages. Google Analytics provides

an impressive help section to allow data analysts to find various ways to see how website

performance is currently being utilized by prospective customers. This analysis may warrant the

need to make changes in website structure or content to improve user experience. These changes

can then be re-analyzed using Google Analytics to show if the changes provided the intended

benefits or what results a campaign or change in website structure has on improving the business

websites effectiveness as a marketing tool.

FACEBOOK INSIGHTS

An August 2012 survey conducted by Manta, a marketing firm emphasizing in small

business online marketing, 42 percent of small business surveyed (n=614), have a Facebook

presence and find it valuable to their business (*The Shift in Small Business Behavior: 90 Percent*

Networking Online, According to New Manta Survey, n.d.).

In December 2012, Facebook, a social networking service launched in 2004, broke the

one billion monthly active user mark (*Key Facts - Facebook Newsroom*, n.d.). Facebook has

become a part of many online users' daily life. Many business owners have wrangled with using

Facebook as a promotional channel as part of their marketing mix.

One main issue small businesses run into when using Facebook is not creating the proper

business page[1]. Many business owners make the mistake of using their personal pages in

conjunction with promoting their business. Using a personal account or a Facebook Group[2] has

limits and is not designed for business promotion. These are permission-based so unlike a

business pages, which is designed to be open to the public and joined through "likes." Due to the

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[1] For the purpose of this guide, pages are synonymous with business pages, which allow
businesses, brands, and celebrities to interact with people who join the page.

[2] Facebook Groups are defined as a closed page for small groups with common interests.

closed nature of groups and individual accounts, which require the group owner to allow an interested person into the group, business pages are open and users can begin receiving news, photos and other engaging content simply by "liking" the page. The first thing a business owner should do when beginning to use Facebook as a promotional channel is to create a business page separate from their personal page.

Pages can have multiple administrators who are allowed to post content on behalf of the business. Smaller organizations can benefit by delegating tasks such as regular content updates to employees who may be familiar with using Facebook. One suggestion when allowing employees to post on behalf of a business is to create an internal policy or guidelines as to acceptable content, scheduling and frequency. Inappropriate content or over-publishing content can become noise and is simply ignored by users. Test content to see what types of content work for your particular audience. Facebook Insights is a good way to measure the effectiveness of the content posted.

Much like Google Analytics, Facebook Insights provides a page administrator with a wealth of tools to measure fans, content and how users interact with your page. If you are new to Facebook, you will want to get your business page established first and then refer to this section later to measure the progress of your Facebook business or fan page.

For this guide we shall look at an already established Facebook business page to reveal some of the key data a small business marketer can mine in order to determine how their page is performing and insights into demographic information in order to assist in designing marketing communications campaigns.

The page being analyzed has been active for nearly six months. It is for a service-based business with a single owner and four employees. The owner began promoting the business by

creating a personal Facebook account and using it to post photos, business news about new

services and slowly realized she did not have the time to dedicate to constantly approving friend

requests[3] and there was no simple way to determine who her target customers were. The owner

later determined it would be in her best interest to create a Facebook business page. Not only did

this allow the fan base to grow without the need for approving each request, but now provided a

new set of tools to give her data on her fans to help her gauge who her audience and their level of

participation on her page.

In order to have the knowledge the proper Facebook environment established to

successfully use the new media platform, an overview of available and existing fan or customer

insight data is required. Facebook defines insights as a means the measure a page's performance

(*Insights | Facebook Help Center | Facebook,* n.d.). It identifies demographic information from

Facebook users who like your business page and interact or share content and posts on a business

page. This demographic information is available for the page administrator to view through the

Insights dashboard.

To access a page's Insights, a page administrator is presented with an additional window

at the top of the business page along with a current graph of how page activity. Clicking to "see

all" link takes the administrator to the full Insights dashboard. The default screen is the overview

page. The overview page shows the user a summary of total page likes, total number of friends

of friends, people talking about the page and weekly total reach over the past month. According

to an article by HubSpot, a leading social media and inbound marketing company, the friends of

friends pages is an important number because it allows administrators or page owners to view the

total possible audience the business page can reach (*How to Analyze Facebook Insights to*

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[3] A friend request is the process of a user connecting with another user. Facebook uses the term
friends to create this relationship.

Improve Your Content Strategy, n.d.). This metric is the total number of friends based on users

who like your page and can potentially see content posted on the business page. It is necessary to

dig deeper into the Insights page to unveil other information about users who like and visit a

business page. Another valuable data tool is the table of recent content and how page fans

interacted with the content. The Page Posts table provides an easy to view layout of content that

can be sorted by date, content type, reach, engaged users or those who clicked on the content,

along with the ability to promote the content quickly through Facebook ads.

The second link in the dashboard is the Likes menu. The Like section provides

administrators with demographic information such as age range, gender and geographic location.

Figure 3 shows an example of the demographic information provided by Facebook Insights for a

small business page. This information is helpful in identifying key demographic segments and

how they interact with your page over a period of time, which the administrator can set. By using

this demographic information, small business owners can view segments they wish to target to

improve page interaction or grow the page. Demographic metrics can aid in helping to develop

marketing messages or content targeted at a specific audience. If a marketer chooses to use

Facebook ads to promote their page, these demographics can also be targeted with specific ads.

For example, two different Facebook ads could be created to target various age, gender or

location based audiences. The effectiveness of these ads can then be measured through the

Insights data to determine campaign success. The bottom portion of the Facebook likes Insight

page also reveals source information, similar to Google Analytics referral data. The source data

displays how users liked a business page, whether it be from on-page content such as a status

update or photo post. Other sources may include liking content shared by fans of the business

page or a "like" link posted on the business website or other social network connect to Facebook. Mobile sources are also displayed.

All of the information offered can be overwhelming, but can also be helpful to determine the tactics used by online marketers to increase their page audience by pinpointing the types of content and the methods used by current or prospective customers engaging with the business on Facebook.

The next menu item on the Insights administration page is the Reach section. Reach delivers even more specific information regarding users contact with the business page. A multitude of metrics is available for analysis. Reach shows demographic information similar to the Likes section.

Reach shows demographic information similar to the Likes section. One note on reach demographic information, the data for people your page has reached is only available when your Page has reached at least 30 people in the seven days preceding the last day of your selected date range. Small business pages just getting started may not influence this amount of fans until the page has gained a sufficient level of page likes.

One key metric from the Reach section is the method in which users visited your page. Some of these include: organic, whic is measured by seeing a post or news in their personal page news feed; paid, or those reached through the placement of Facebook ads; viral, or fans who liked a business page through a post seen on one of their friends news feeds. A total number of how users reached a page is also provided. Like many of the charts provided, Facebook Insights charts are interactive and users can see specific data from a particular date by hovering the mouse cursor over the chart.

Figure 3. Facebook Insights Demographic Graph

People Who Like Your Page (Demographics and Location)   See Likes

Gender and Age

Female 86.2%   6.9%   24.1%   25.9%   10.3%   15.5%   3.4%
                13-17   18-24   25-34   35-44   45-54   55-64   65+
Male 12.1%   1.7%   6.9%   1.7%   1.7%

Countries   Cities   Languages
58 United States of America   45 Oxford, MS   57 English (US)
                          2 Atlanta, GA   1 Spanish
                          2 Batesville, MS
                          2 Baton Rouge, LA
                          1 Pascagoula, MS
                          1 Orange, CA
                          1 Carrboro, NC

This hovering technique will show a pop-up window of specific date and data information depending on the metric being analyzed. The Reach section also shows a "Unique Users by Frequency" chart. This chart indicates the number of individual users who viewed content on the page, as well as the frequency of views over a specified time. The Reach chart also includes a drop-down menu to segment the types of content that reached a page's fans. Content such as a timeline[4] post or photo, video or event can be measured separately.

The last graph in the Reach portion of the Insights dashboard is the "Visits to Your Page" chart. It is a line graph providing data in two categories. The first, page views, is simply the number of times the page was viewed on a given day. The second is unique views, or the number of unique visitors viewing a page over a given date range.

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[4] The timeline is the term used for content and user experience information within Facebook.

Facebook Insights offers two more sections as a part of the Insights dashboard. The "Talking About This" section is similar to the Reach section, but differs by showing the type of content users find most engaging. A dropdown menu allows administrators to select different types of content such as page likes, stories from wall posts, mentions of the business page in fan photos, posts by other users, questions, if pages use the poll or question feature available on the pages timeline or check-ins. Check-ins allow fans to use geo-location based technologies such as a mobile phone Global Positioning System(GPS) to check-in or interact with a business page if the user is at the business' physical locations. An example of this use would be if a fan went to a restaurant, they could check-in at the restaurant and this would notify their friend on Facebook of their current location. This check-in information appears on the user's timeline and in their friends news feed as well as the business page's timeline if this feature is enabled on the page.

Check-ins is the last section of the Insights dashboard. It provides demographic information similar to the other sections, but only on users who checked into at a business location either via a mobile device or the Facebook website. This data is useful in discovering Facebook fans that have visited a business and may actually be performing business transactions. Possibilities of uses for this from a marketing communication standpoint could be giving users who check-in special incentives or discounts. The check-in provides a location-based metric that could be valuable to small business owners and marketers.

All of the data from Facebook Insights can be exported to delimited files and provide all of the Insight information to use in conjunction with other data collected and allows for further analysis offline via spreadsheet software such as Microsoft Excel. Facebook launched new Insights software in July 2011, so data prior to this is unavailable to users. Business owners

should make it a habit to regularly export Insights data in order to use it in the future in the event Facebook makes changes to the Insights features.

Much like Google Analytics, Facebook Insights offers small business owners and marketers with the ability to collect a large amount of user data. Demographic data is critical when developing marketing communications campaigns. Even though demographic data is available, no individual data is available in Facebook Insights beyond gender, age and location. Personal fan information is not disclosed other than manually analyzing fans if they have allowed the business page administrator to view their personal profile. This is an attempt to provide quality insight to the business while maintaining the privacy of Facebook users.

With over a billion active users, Facebook has become an integral part of a small business' marketing strategy. The ability to affordably connect with so many users gives any business the opportunity to reach a global community of prospective customers. Even if a business does not take part in e-commerce, Facebook provides a platform to develop brand recognition across the globe. One business owner interviewed for this project stated they did not use Facebook personally so there was no need to use it for their business. This type of thinking will likely cost the business recognition as audience media consumption practices continue to shift even more than it has to the digital realm. With low-cost options for promoting a business through Facebook Ads or simply by engaging users through the use of interesting content, Facebook has become a major force in digital interaction. Despite a recent report by the Pew Research Center for Internet and American Life Project stating 21 percent of users often take breaks from using the social network, it still provides a large audience of potential customers for small business with the same report stating 61 percent of American adults use Facebook (*Coming and Going on Facebook | Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project,* n.d.).

OTHER MEASUREMENT TOOLS

For the small business owner, a complete online and social media marketing approach includes more interaction with social networks beyond a website and a presence on Facebook. Consumers of varying age ranges and cultural interest either gather on specific networks or use multiple networks depending on their interests beyond websites, blogs, Facebook and Twitter. If users prefer video, they may choose a site like YouTube, Vimeo or Ustream. Photo lovers will flock to sites like Google's Picasa, Yahoo's Flickr or one of the newer and more popular mobile photo sharing sites, Instagram. Business owners can use any of these channels as a part of a 360-degree marketing mix by using a variety of content that appeals to audiences on these networks. These sites can also provide marketing managers with insight into who their customers are and how to use the data to target prospective or current consumers. For the purpose of this guide, Twitter and Bitly, a url shortening service will be discussed.

Before understanding data marketers can mine from Twitter, a brief overview of the service is necessary. Twitter, a micro-blogging site launched in 2006, allows users to communicate via small text messages or "tweets" up to 140 characters in length, but also allows the users to post photos and links to other content (*Twitter,* n.d.). Since Twitter launched it has become one of the most popular social networks. Twitter has been defined by some as a person to person network, providing electronic word of mouth (WOM) communications. (Bulearca & Bulearca, 2010). According to Semicost, a data intelligenc firm in France, Twitter reached 500 million total users in July 2012, 27.4 percent of these users are from the United States. Twitter users post some 175 million tweets per day (*Semiocast — Twitter Reaches Half a Billion Accounts — More Than 140 Millions in the U.S,* July 2012.).

Twitter delivers marketers another opportunity to reach many prospective customers. A common small business use for Twitter is to entice users through clever tweets that link to a company website where users can gain more information or be offered a call to action, such as purchasing products, signing up for an email newsletter or download more information about a company.

The explosive growth of Twitter as a popular social media network means marketers have to wrangle through a large quantity of content to gain followers, the term used for users who interact with other users. A common use for finding niche content is through the use of hashtags. Hashtags are terms used to allow users to find content of interest. A hashtag is a word in a tweet preceded by a # or pound character. This is the method used to search topics on Twitter. By monitoring and using hashtags, online marketers can see the latest trending topics and use the hashtag to inject their tweets into conversations.

Hashtags are one method used to measure performance on Twitter through third party analytics packages designed specifically at mining data from Twitter. Currently, Twitter only provides analytics data to users who have signed-up for Twitter advertising services. Some free analytics resources are available for business owners to monitor both their brand and conversations about their business on Twitter. Many free services provide limited data, but depending on the need, could be sufficient for small business owners on a tight budget. Other services, such as HootSuite, Klout and numerous other services provide a multitude of analytics information from Twitter and are available through subscriptions. Some services offer small monthly subscriptions for smaller businesses while other offer enterprise solutions on an annual contract basis. The data available from these services range from simply monitoring follower accounts and hashtags, while the other offer geo-location mapping and options to create

workflows of trends, demographics and the ability to alert administrators if certain tweet criteria are met, which may have an affect on brand reputation.

Twitter, as part of a multi-channel marketing communications mix, can use other tools to collect follower data, especially if a tweet provides a link to the business's website or blog. URL (universal resource locator) shortening tools such as Bitly allow for website links to be used on Twitter and use data algorithms to take long website addresses and condense them into shorter links that don't have such an impact on the 140 character limit of tweets. While Twitter also has a url shortening mechanism, a best practice method for businesses is registering a short domain name to allow for brand recognition. An example of this would be if a website address is www.mysmallbusiness.com, then a business might purchase a domain name such as mybiz.co to have a brand-recognized short url. This domain can then be mapped through services such as Bitly and then a user can condense longer web addresses to short urls for posting on micro-blog sites such as Twitter. Bitly will then provide some analytic data from short urls so users can measure where traffic sources originate. These short urls can also be used on other networks such as Instagram, Facebook, or similar online marketing channels.

Combining short URLs with Google's campaign builder service is another suggested best practice technique. This is a a free tool that allows online marketers to create campaign based links, shorten these links and then used the combined data collecting power of Bitly and Google Analytics to gain a more precise analysis of how social media traffic is being used in conjunction with driving users to other social networks or the company's website.

As you have read, monitoring a business' online presence and marketing tactics is critical to the world of analytics. The tools covered in this chapter are intended to give small business marketers a starting point for the analysis of existing web traffic, but also as a resource for

continuous monitoring of online and social media marketing campaigns. By properly configuring analytics data, business owners can routinely examine the data in their marketing communication decisions.

BUILDING YOUR ONLINE MARKETING NETWORK

The last twenty years have spawned a digital revolution, not seen since the industrial revolution. The advances in digital technologies might make some people dizzy. Computers that once filled rooms and took teams of people to operate, now fit in the palm of your hand and possess hundreds of times the processing power than they did just ten years ago. It is no wonder why small business owners are reluctant to embrace online technologies as a marketing tool. In this section, a model for developing what the author will refer to as at 360-degree model will be discussed. While this model is not necessarily a new concept in online marketing, emphasis will be placed on establishing measureable content for tracking communication performance. Outside assistance from web developers or tech-savvy people may be sought for the creation of their initial network, but if properly planned and developed, the 360-degree model should be something a small business owner can manage. Basic computer skills are necessary, but with a proper set of modern-day online publishing tools, business owners and marketers can develop marketing communications for their organization.

The section will be presented in three parts. The first is an overview of the core of the 360-degree business website using a blog-based environment with an emphasis on the Wordpress open-source content management system. The second section will discuss integration of the website with social networks and other online communications tools, which reach prospective customers online. Finally, content strategies and tactics will be presented in an effort to inspire business owners to begin building and engaging with an online audience. Finally, business

owners will be inspired by the content strategies and tactics presented to them so they can build and engage an online audience.

WEBSITE AT THE CORE

Since the initial dot com boom in the 1990s, businesses have jumped online, trying to grow their businesses by reaching new customers, whether it be through increased brand recognition or e-commerce. Since then, the changes in technologies like the dawn of the social network era of Facebook and Twitter, et al. have created a shift in how websites function and how users interact with a businesses online presence. In just the past five years, a company's website has morphed into a portal offering visitors more than the ability to gather general information about the business. Websites have become more than print brochures in a digital format. A modern small business website should not only provide information, but offer visitors the ability to interact with the business through the use of contact forms, blog comments, message boards for discussion and content that is informative and effective, so that to turn a prospective customer can become into a repeat customer.

The website should be the core of any businesses online presence. There are business owners who feel they don't have a large budget to develop elaborate, beautifully designed websites so they either rely on nothing or jump to networks like Facebook. While Facebook has a billion users, there are still prospective customers who are not on Facebook so not all online marketing can be managed there. This could leave many Internet users in the dark due to lack of an open, publicly accessible website for anyone to visit.

According to an article from inbound marketing think tank, HubSpot (2009), some social networks have policies preventing online users from using personal profiles in the promotion of

business offerings (*Thinking About Using Facebook As Your Company Webpage? Think Again!*, 2001.). This is one reason a website should be the core of an effective online marketing program.

A solid business website lets the identity of a business be in the forefront, not intertwined into a social network that has a standard design and functionality for all users. A properly designed website must to represent the business mission and philosophy. Powerhomebiz.com, a small business marketing website, recommends using the Internet as a low cost means of expanding business operations beyond a physical location (*10 Ways to Expand Your Small Business with Little Cash*, n.d.). The business website offers many small businesses the opportunity to use the Web to provide information to prospective customers beyond normal operating hours.

A solid business website provides a platform for small business owners to quickly update consumers on the latest products, services and information about their specific business. Noted search engine optimization authority Lee Odden (2012) sees the use of blogs and a business website, integrated with business social network channels as the best method for creating an automated promotional channel (Odden, 2012). Odden encourages business owners to create an "optimized" online environment. The strategic approach of developing an online platform where content is optimized to take advantage of search engine technology, thereby evaluating the rating of a business website to rank higher in online searches.

Web-based content management systems (WCMS) are a convenient and cost-effective method for small business owners to publish content online without the need for extensive programming knowledge. A WCMS is defined as dynamic database server program that stores online content for publishing beyond standard HTML pages (Patel, Savan, Rathod, & Prajapati, 2011). A WCMS option is a preferred choice for those business owners who want to easily

update website content. Modern WCMS platforms make publishing to the web as easy as using common desktop-based software such as a word processing program. Content management systems can be extended through the use of plug-is, or smaller bits of code developed for a specific function such as customer contact forms, e-commerce shopping carts, social sharing and bookmarking or multimedia content integration tools for audio and video. At present, WCMS technologies are designed to optimize online environments for search engines as well as connecting social media networks with the website to provide an automated multi-channel marketing environment. There are many WCMS packages available from both open-source and commercial developers. WCMS also provide a cost advantage to small business owners by minimizing the need for complex website design through the use of themes or templates that can be easily modified to incorporate the business's brand identity. Content managed systems provide business owners with quick and easy methods to integrate the collection of analytics data from their website as well as technologies to maximize search engine optimization or SEO.

Through the use of plugins, business owners can easily connect online publishing platforms to Google Analytics in order to use the methods discussed in the data section of this guide. Once the website is connected to an analytics platform, near-real-time data from the website can be analyzed in order for small business marketers to recognize patterns in website behavior and what content is most viewed by prospective customers. This data is effective in making adjustments to content to easily provide the web user with the information they seek. SEO plugins also work in conjunction with both the website and the analytics platforms to allow small business marketers to maximize the content of a website to improve site search engine ratings. These SEO terms are then connected with analytics data, providing key search terms driving users to a businesses' website. SEO strategies and tactics are an ongoing approach for the

optimization of website search terms to improve website ranking among search engines, but extends beyond the scope of this guide.

Among the open-source WCMS applications available, Wordpress is by far the most popular choice according to a January 2013 trend analysis conducted by online webhosting provider Web Net Hosting. Among the three leading open-source WCMS platforms: Wordpress, Drupal and Joomla, information about Wordpress was searched more than 30 million times over the survey period from 2003-2013 (*WordPress Vs Joomla Vs Drupal - CMS Popularity War*, January 2013.).

Wordpress is heralded for its ease of use compared to the other two leading open-source platforms. First launched in 2003 as a blogging platform, Wordpress has evolved over recent years to become one of the easiest methods for quickly publishing online content suited for small businesses or organizations. Part of Wordpress's evolution is the ability of the programming community to develop plug-in software to extend Wordpress into a high performance marketing communications tool. Since blogging is at the core of Wordpress, the term blogging has evolved beyond the early thought of simply being an online journal for users. Blogs now mean the businesses have a platform to quickly update consumers and become industry experts in their field on the latest product developments and industry trends. The term "blog" often frightens many small business owners. In a discussion with one business owner for this guide, the term "blog" means exposing personal information about herself to the world. She was not looking at the term "blogging" from a business point of view and how you could simply use semantics to change the term "blog" to "news," or business information in order to provide current insights to prospective customers. Brian Solis, a pioneer in social media marketing, considers the blog as the social media marketing compass for businesses. Solis (2011) sees blogs and the ability to

syndicate blog or WCMS based content to other online channels as means for content delivery to niche audiences as well as vertical communities that contribute to the overall marketing audience (Solis, 2011).

For a multi-channel marketing communications approach, the website is the online face of the business. Social networks are additional channels, but mainly for promotion and as a means to drive prospective customers to the website. Some examples will be provided in the content section of this guide. Small business owners should take the time to establish a branded website, determine the social networks most associated with your business category, uses these networks as content distribution channels to engage online users and attempt to drive these users to the website through the use of quality content.

SOCIAL NETWORKS

Social networks give consumers a public platform to share their voice with the world on subjects ranging from consumer products to government policy and any other opinions they have. The ability for one person to have a voice online provides them the ability to potentially spread messages to thousands of online users. For this reason, it is imperative for even the smallest organizations to shift their thinking from one directional outbound marketing thinking to a relationship based model.

A key part in creating a 360-degree multi-channel marketing environment is the use of social networks as additional platforms to promote your business, engage and inform prospective customers and turn prospects into customers. The landscape of social networks is constantly changing. As the growth in online media use increases, more and more social networks appear. Social sites exist for nearly any type of hobby or lifestyle such as music, food, daters, hikers,

bikers, and many others. Social networking extends beyond Facebook and Twitter, although they are considered to two main networks due to their large number of users.

Small business marketers often have a unique quality about their business, focusing on a specific product line or target market, such as women or other qualities that make the business unique. It is critical when establishing a multi-channel approach for business marketers to research the niche social networks so they can find a digital realm where consumers may be talking online about certain products, so relationships with prospects can be built through engaging and listening to how consumers voice their opinions online. For instance, a restaurant owner would want to monitor social networking sites focusing on the food service industry. Networks such as Urbanspoon and Yelp allow consumers to post comments, reviews and photos of a restaurant. The restaurant owner should first establish control of their brand on the network by identifying themselves as the business owners. Once this is verified, the restaurant owner can then manage the profile on the social network, but more importantly, read the information the online consumer is posting about the restaurant. This feedback offers a way for the restaurant owner to gauge the feelings of users about the business and make necessary adjustments based on reviews and customer input. While this may seem time consuming, the task of listening to what users are saying about a business can easily be monitored through online software.

Integrated marketing communications and relationship marketing models focus on the customer and availability of customer feedback is essential in building a strong online brand identity. Business owners should also understand this concept. Users who write negative reviews on sites such as Yelp are well within their right, as long as the network's policy is not violated. Business owners cannot control the tone on those sites. Negative brand perceptions can be costly to small businesses, which is why listening through social channels is essential to managing

business digital brand identity. Marketing communicators can use the information gained from negativity online to make adjustments in customer service or business operations. Bad reviews cannot be deleted, but can be managed and new messaging can be created so that thinking of future users is balanced. Small business marketers can engage with the online community through these social networks, but it is not recommended by this author to engage directly with the user or users who post negative feedback. It is suggested to engage with the community as a whole, acknowledge the negative reviews, and provide information that the business is taking steps for improvement.

The importance of the social networks to the communication mix resides in finding the specific network outside of what are considered the big three, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. It is necessary for the small business marketer to determine media outlets and tactics appropriate for their business. Online marketing communications leaders are forecasting for the growth of niche social networks over the next few years. Cathy Pittham, Managing Director Europe, for communications consultants Racepoint Group in a recent interview with NMK, an online business information hub for business in the United Kingdom, believes niche networks will drive growth in social media networks in the near future. She cites the need for businesses to understand the sophisticated online consumer and tailor marketing to meet audience interests (*New Media Knowledge - Niche Is the "Future of Social Networks": Interview with Racepoint Group,* n.d.). Pittham also cautions social media marketers to beware of the dangerous effects of brand noise in their social media marketing communications.

Social networking use may shift to emerging networks, but the core philosophy behind an individual's voice in the online world is here to stay. Since the dawn of social networking, marketers have joined with media developers in the creation of new networks and methods for

engaging and monitoring the consumer's voice online. The role of the social network to the small business owner is important to a shift in marketing thought reluctantly embraced by small business owners. The shift in thought is necessary to create what Porter and Kramer called the shared value concept. Shared value is defined as policies and operating practices enhancing the connections between societal and economic progress (Porter, Porter, & Kramer, 2011). Porter and Kramer feel shared value has the power to create the next surge of global growth. Social networking is vital to the concept of shared value as it provides a voice to the public while also providing a voice for an organization, no matter the size or type.

CONTENT IS STILL KING

Business owners often spend far too much time with the way a website looks, as opposed to what a website says about the business and the information the site provides to consumers. In today's media environment, the functionality of the web platform needs to extend beyond the computer screen, but also designed for mobile and tablet devices. A small business owner should understand the relevance of quality content when developing marketing communications campaigns. Again, the explosive growth of new media outlets means there is the need for growth in the development of more content. The use of new media content can be an effective marketing tool to small businesses. Clever and innovative content is a key component in a relationship marketing model. Instead of just focusing on selling products, it is necessary for relationship building in order to build brand loyalty among consumers (Stein, 2013).

Small businesses can add a plethora of new online content to their marketing mix. Email newsletters provide a means for small business to inform prospects with information about sales, specials or other opportunities for engagement of customers. Users can also be engaged by the strategic use of blogging and sharing blog information through social media channels is another

possibility. The use of video and photography has become a popular method to connect with online users. Mobile device advancements have given anyone with a smart phone the power to create small videos or take photos and post to social sites such as YouTube or Instagram.

It is up to the small business owner to determine what methods best suit their goals. Businesses can market to consumers by using a combination of offline and online content methods to market to consumers. Print ad campaigns can have a unique web address for campaign effectiveness measurement as well as providing a call to action encouraging users to visit an online network that can provide more information or engaging content.

BE AN EXPERT

One method for small business owners to develop frequent and compelling content to reach prospects is through the role of expert. Nobody knows their business like the owner, especially sole-proprietors and smaller organizations. If your business has survived over a long term, then a business owner can provide valuable information about products and services through online posts and the benefits to consumers. An excellent example of the content expert approach is best-selling author and social media marketer, Gary Vaynerchuk. Vaynerchuk's family owned a liquor store in New Jersey and while in college Vaynerchuk worked at the family business and immersed himself in reading about wine. Vaynerchuk used his knowledge of wine to re-brand his family business through the use of online wine reviews and podcasts about wine. Vanyerchuk became an expert on wine tasting and turned his brand Wine Library from a $4 million dollar value to a being worth $45 million (*About Winelibrary TV*, n.d.).

Being an expert in your business provides an excellent marketing and public relations opportunity for any small business owner. Through blogs, social networks and even offline platforms like seminars or workshops, business owners can step into the forefront of their

business category by offering expert advice and going beyond the sale offering on-going support, whether it be through online channels or offline means. Expert knowledge provides a vault of information for a business owner to frequently inform online users through blogs, online video demonstrations, e-newsletters and other distribution outlets where users are seeking information about a product or service.

Web 2.0 tools such as WCMS systems and social media networks allow new content opportunities for small business to market their business. One tactic developed by the author and a restaurant and music venue owner is the micro-campaign. This idea is a no cost method to "test the waters" of marketing messages by providing a boost to business during slow periods. In areas such as a small town with a university, there is a cyclical economy. Thousands of students populate the town most of the year, but there are times such as holidays and the summer when student populations decrease. This has an impact on small business. During these slow periods, the business owner would send out tweets offering special incentives to users who showed the tweet to their server at the restaurant. The micro-campaign proved to be an interesting approach, but the business owner did not think to measure the success of the micro-campaign and track users who showed the tweets. Future attempts at this will now be measured by simply requiring servers to make a note in the business point of sale system to indicate whether or not a customer used the online incentive.

The previous example shows how a no-cost method can easily be tested in the online world to see how micro-campaigns can drive spontaneous commerce. Business owners should not be hesitant to test methods to drive business. This ability to experiment is what has created growth in the social media and online marketing fields. There is no silver bullet, but the unexpected idea could lead to unexpected sales.

As personalization continues to be an important component in an integrated marketing strategy, the expert voice can be an important element in building a relationship with a prospective customer, as well as making that customer a repeat customer. Value in a quality relationship between seller and customer is and will always be at the core of commerce, but more than ever in today's customer-savvy world. The world of social media and Web 2.0 technologies provide a new means for buyer and sellers to form relationships based on the norm of commitment and trust (Sashi, 2012).

This relationship goes beyond the one-to-one interaction between buyer and seller. From the seller standpoint, a relationship must be developed with prospective customers. These prospects will seek information about a business from their peers or friends through the use of online reviews, actual word of mouth and electronic word of mouth. Rashid (2003) notes one benefit of developing relationships as creating a competitive advantage for the business owner (Rashid, 2003). Another potential benefit to a relationship marketing approach is the ability to be more profitable through customer retention. This point is supported through research conducted, noting the cost of gaining a new customer can be between five and time times more expensive than retaining an existing customer (2003), 743.

Proper planning of the online and social media marketing environment, as well as content planning, can give a small business a means to easily distribute expert content, thereby informing consumers and assisting in building a relationship online. Potentially, this can lead to new sales growth from to positive customer experiences that may be shared on social media sites and influencing prospective customers to become purchasers based on their friend's positive experience.

MEASURE TO MAINTAIN

As previously discussed in the online data section, measuring online marketing efforts is critical to an initial audit of a business's online environment, as well as its future. Return on investment (ROI) calculation is needed to determine if an online or social media investment is worth the time and effort. Traditional business ROI calculations are based upon the benefit of the investment divided by the cost. These costs take also consider the employee time needed as part of the cost (Geho & Dangelo, 2012). Since the birth of social media marketing, industry leaders have offered formulas for calculating ROI for social marketing programs. Others believe small business owners should not concern themselves with calculating ROI, but rather determine the "Impact of Relationships" (IOR). IOR determines how a relationship is developed with a business and the impact that relationship has on the "totality of the business as a whole" (*Social Media Marketers Can - and Must - Prove ROI | ZDNet*, n.d.). For small businesses the investment may simply be a shift from traditional media budgets. Traditional media such as newspaper and broadcast ROI are also difficult to calculate with precision. By using the measurement tools discussed in the previous section, online marketers can continuously monitor their online environment and collect useable data for their marketing decisions.

Some other tools are available to track specific online campaigns. One popular tool is Google's Campaign URL Builder. The URL Builder is a tool available through Google Analytics or Adwords. It allows for the creation of unique URLs marketers can create for a specific campaign. The custom campaign tool enables campaign specific source, medium, term, content and campaign tags to be added to a website link. This unique URL can then be distributed on a specific social network, banner advertisement, e-mail campaign or other message. Google Analytics then measures the tags and a campaign report can be generated to see specific click

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data from the campaign. This process is helpful in determining what marketing methods are more beneficial to driving traffic, or gathering information or providing downloadable information in exchange for user information such as an email address.

The ability to measure these clicks in conjunction with social media insights can help determine who are the social media influencers; people sharing links and talking about the business online. This can aid in developing what Solis (2012) calls Social Capital or the reach of a message, the relevance of messages and the resonance (Solis, 2012).

No matter the marketing method used, developing a measurable metric is key. Whether it is ROI or IOR, online marketing takes time and through the use of analytics tools previously mentioned. The variety of online tools makes tracking easier than in the past while providing an accurate method of tracking participation. An understanding of customer behavior through the use of data measurement is critical to determining if online and social marketing through relationships is worth the investment, be it time, money or both.

CHAPTER V:

DISCUSSION

Hopefully this guide has provided an initial look into how marketing has changed in the last five, ten and twenty years. The constant wave of new technologies has finally reached main street America. Businesses can no longer rely on traditional media outlets for their marketing communications. While traditional media is still important and relevant, there is a need for small business owners to take a step back and reassess where their marketing budgets are being spent and if they are reflecting an increase in business. The content in this guide has provided a starting point by conferring the evolution from a promotional marketing mix to the integrated marketing communications principles developed in the 1990s. The IMC model has since incorporated relationship and content marketing methods through the growth in social networking.

As noted, the need for auditing existing online customer data is an important part of an online marketing strategy. Regularly monitoring data will allow for a change in marketing messages. Depending on what the data says, different messages may be created for different audiences.

The business website is probably the most important tool for an online marketing mix. Small businesses should establish a website as a base for their digital identity and through the use of on-going and germane content distribute messages across social channels such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and other niche social media networks to reach the intended audience. By becoming the voice of the business, small business marketers can share expert knowledge of

their organizations through blogs and even offline channels like seminars. This will establish credibility with prospective customers, aid in the trust components of relationship marketing and improve overall brand equity. As noted, many online measurement tools available for organizations of any size are imperative for use in a new marketing campaign. By creating an online landscape and presence over time, business owners can monitor digital marketing performance as part of a regular routine.

There are also opportunities for research and education in the fields of small business online marketing. As the overall dynamics of the economy change to meet the digital demands, the need for creating a new crop of marketing communicators will be necessary. Academic researchers and educators should investigate changes in media curriculum to incorporate the many models created and used in the business world to education a new generation of marketing communicators. Students of the future who are interested in IMC must be able to combine both creative and analytic thinking so they can participate in shaping the changes in advertising and advertising agencies.

Further research in this area could study specific strategies and tactics used over time in the engagement of customers and the effects of these techniques in growing online traffic and converting prospects into customers, as well as monitoring customer relations after the sale. As more and more businesses shift their marketing communications resources online it will be necessary to gauge key performance indicators and how changes in technology and business practices shape attitudes and awareness of small businesses in the online world. These shifts provide new research opportunities for academics as well as marketing practitioners to attempt to quantify specific strategies or tactics in the ever evolving digital world.

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