

**Digital Marketing concept and strategy for a Finnish Start-up,
Case: Sofi Filtration**

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<p>The case company is a Finnish start-up company that operates in the industrial water filtration business and who aims to increase its brand awareness and generate more sales leads. The aim of this study is to provide effective and inexpensive tools for Sofi Filtration to engage its target audience and grow its business by being acknowledged as an expert in industrial water filtration.</p> <p>The thesis is part of the International Business Management program offered by HAAGA-HELIA University of Applied Sciences Helsinki, Finland.</p> <p>The literature review for the thesis provides the foundation and understanding for the fields of B2B branding and digital marketing. The study outlines the key tools and concepts that a small company can utilize to increase its presence and visibility in the digital landscape. Part of the concepts presented in this thesis are used by the author in his daily work and hence the added hands-on expertise to this paper.</p> <p>The case company underwent an internal marketing audit as well as resource based view analysis utilizing the VRIO framework This case study reveals the current digital marketing situation of Sofi Filtration and provides a clear digital marketing strategy with three goals in mind: generate more traffic, increase the sales and brand awareness. Some of the digital tools presented in this study have been successfully implemented as a part of this research. Tools such as videos and social media are already in the experimentation phase in Sofi Filtration.</p> <p>The development of this study has taken into consideration the idea that the results would benefit not only Sofi filtration but any small and medium company that has decided to embrace the digital era and engage its audience.</p>	
<p>Keywords B2B branding, digital marketing, content marketing, social media, email marketing, blog, pay per click, analytics, sales leads.</p>	

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Finally I want to express my gratitude to my wife, Minttu who motivated me during the whole thesis process.

Table of contents

1	Introduction.....	1
1.1	The case company.....	1
1.2	Purpose and Objectives.....	2
1.3	Research needs and problem.....	3
1.4	Risk and delimitations.....	4
2	Literature review.....	6
2.1	Branding.....	7
2.2	Business to business (B2B) branding.....	9
2.3	Organizational (B2B) marketing.....	10
2.4	Digital marketing tools and concepts.....	13
2.5	Content Marketing.....	16
2.6	Email marketing.....	31
2.7	Social media.....	38
2.8	Video Marketing.....	50
2.9	Pay Per Click.....	52
2.10	Google AdWords.....	57
2.11	Google Analytics.....	64
2.12	Search engine optimization (SEO).....	66
2.13	Literature summary.....	69
3	Research methodology and methods.....	74
3.1	What is case study research?.....	77
3.2	Types of case studies.....	79
3.3	Validity and reliability.....	80
4	Digital marketing strategy for Sofi-Filtration.....	83
4.1	The company.....	83
4.2	The product - Sofi Filter.....	85
4.3	Digital marketing situation and company SWOT.....	87
4.4	The VRIO framework.....	89
4.5	Sofi Filtration, how to lead by branding.....	93
4.6	Digital strategy for Sofi Filtration.....	97

4.7 SWOT analysis for a digital marketing concept.....	98
4.8 Implementation schedule and costs.....	99
5 Conclusions.....	101
Attachments.....	113
Attachment 1. Buyer persona template	
Attachment 2. How Finnish Startups View Media Advertising (Infographic)	
Attachment 3. The State of B2B Content Marketing: 2014 (Infographic)	
Attachment 4. 50 Tried and True Social Insights	
Attachment 5. Small Businesses Find ROI in Social Media (Infographic)	
Attachment 6. Using social media for lead generation. (Infographic)	
Attachment 7. Top benefits achieved in social media in 2013.	
Attachment 8. 50 Social Media Best Practices by Salesforce.com	
Attachment 9. HAAGA-HELIA Leading by Branding case studies	
Attachment 10. Digital Marketing Strategy & Plan for Sofi Filtration eBook	

1 Introduction

The idea for this master thesis came after a discussion with Mr. Hakala, president of the board at Sofi Filtration, about social media and ways to increase the brand awareness of a company with little or limited financial resources. The discussion led to this master thesis and to a comprehensive research regarding the digital marketing tools and concepts that a small company such as Sofi Filtration can use to increase sales, raise the brand awareness and grow their business.

In November 2013 I have started working for Sofimation, a company that is part of the Sofi Group. The Sofi Group is comprised of: Sofi Filtration, Sofimine and Sofimation. All three companies share the same office space in Suomenoja, Espoo. Being in charge of Sales and Marketing in Sofimation, I experimented with and applied quite extensively part of the concepts and tools described in this study. Some of the results and practices are shared between the three companies and their managers. Therefore the result of this study can have an impact on and could be implemented in three different companies with different business activities.

The thesis contains the following main parts: Introduction, Literature Review, Research Methodology and Methods, Digital Marketing Strategy and Concept for Sofi Filtration and Conclusion. The research and writing has been carried out during summer of 2012 and autumn of 2014.

1.1 The case company

Sofi Filtration is a small Finnish startup company that operates in the clean technology sector in Finland. The history of the company can be traced back to 2010 when three engineers, Mr. Pertti Rantala, Mr. Simo Aho and Mr. Ville Hakala, met at the Helsinki University of Technology. Mr. Pertti Rantala was the one who came up with the original idea of a water treatment technology that could revolutionize how industrial micro-filtration is done. Sofi Filtration has currently three employees, which are the original founders as well.

The company has developed a unique product that addresses an unmet need in the industrial water treatment business. The technology has been patented in Finland and it can be applied to various industries such as mining and metallurgy but it is not limited to that. A typical sales cycle lasts between 6 to 12 months or longer but this is not a strict rule. As Sofi Filter is an investment good, companies have to test the product before the purchase decision is made. Piloting and testing the Sofi Filter at the customer site is crucial for the success of the sale. The first commercial sale of the Sofi Filter was in 2011. The company, the product and the current situation will be deeper analyzed in chapter 3.3 and onwards.

1.2 Purpose and Objectives

The case company has realized that in order to be competitive in today's business environment, it has to have a consistent and strong digital presence. Additionally, customers and decision makers have changed their way of looking for information and this makes it imperative for Sofi Filtration to be present where its potential customers are. This study is motivated by the need to understand and utilize the different digital tools available for a small company. Currently the case company does not have a digital strategy.

The purpose of the study is to provide Sofi Filtration with a viable digital marketing concept specially designed for small and medium enterprises. Additionally, this concept aims to present the digital tools and strategy that Sofi Filtration needs right now to grow their business. Upon successful implementation of this plan the company's online visibility and presence should increase considerably and furthermore it should generate sales leads which in turn could lead to actual closed deals.

Another objective of this study is to create an online presence and hence a brand awareness for Sofi Filtration with as little financial aid as possible. This concept will take advantage of some of the free and cost effective digital marketing tools available out there and look at the elements of digital marketing that can be applied to a small start-up. Furthermore, another aim of this concept is the transferability to other small companies. In particular, this is a fortunate case because Mr. Hakala is part owner in two other small enterprises which would be in the same situation and need. It would

be interesting to see how this concept works if replicated. Last but not least this study aims to give Sofi Filtration the necessary tools to create awareness and gain business on a national and international level.

Ideally every strategy should have a goal and that goal should be measurable. The goals of this particular digital marketing strategy are defined as seen below:

- Improved overall brand image
- Brand awareness in professional social media
- Increased website and social media traffic
- Leads generation & increased sales

The digital marketing concept and this entire case study should give Sofi Filtration the possibility to choose from several options that best suits the company at any given moment.

1.3 Research needs and problem

This thesis aims to study and deliver answers to the following questions while considering the importance and applicability to the case company.

The main research question is:

How can digital marketing help a small start-up company to generate more sales leads and increase their brand awareness among their target audience?

More specific questions are:

What are the components of a digital marketing strategy that can be applied successfully and cost effectively to a small start-up company?

Which tools are suitable for an industrial start-up company in the water filtration business?

1.4 Risk and delimitations

The main potential risk associated with this study is the time allocated to this project. The research and development of a digital marketing tool and strategy can be time consuming and challenging especially for a working parent. However with careful planning the risks could be lowered.

An additional potential risk is the constant technological development as well as the evolution in the digital landscape. It may be that, the tools and concepts presented in this paper have changed and some could be even outdated. What works today may not work very well tomorrow. Customer behavior changes constantly and therefore some practices may need to be looked at again when new data is available.

Lastly, financial risks can arise in the implementation phase of the outcome of this research paper. Implementing a digital marketing strategy can be in most cases time consuming and financially challenging. Currently, hiring a full time marketing manager may not be a financially viable solution for a small company. However, parts for the strategy can be implemented and followed through by existing employees with little time and effort.

Digital marketing is a vast area that is constantly changing and therefore this study cannot touch all aspects in this field. This study will focus on concepts and tools that can have a real and immediate impact on the company case. Furthermore, there are components of digital marketing that affect the success of a digital strategy but due to their complexity are not analyzed in detail in this paper. Such a component is the company website which in itself could be a topic for a master thesis. However the company website is at the center of the digital marketing acting like a virtual business card for the company. I will assume in this study that the company website is designed following the latest technology and standards and it is in accordance with the company brand, goals, vision and overall marketing strategy. As I am writing this study, Sofi Filtration actually looks into a complete rebranding of their marketing materials and that includes a complete redesign and remake of their website.

The field of digital marketing is an interactive playground and therefore it requires active participation from both companies and customers. Hence, the success of the digital marketing tool and strategy will depend on the consistency and dedication with which the company decides to implement it.

2 Literature review

This literature section of this thesis will look into different aspects of Marketing, Branding, B2B Marketing and Digital Marketing. The theories and concepts described in the following sections should give the reader a solid understanding of these concepts and fields of activity.

We live in a digital era and the need for hardcopy books continues to decrease. Taking that into consideration I would like to mention that most of the books, surveys and studies used for this study have been acquired from the internet in electronic format and therefore the page numbers might not be the same with the ones of a hard copy of the same book. Additionally, a book in an electronic format presents several advantages over a traditional book: fast search based on terms and keywords as well as portability over multiple devices, just to name a few. Upon request, the digital books can be provided to the supervisor of this study as well as to Sofi Filtration.

The research for this thesis will follow the framework presented in figure 1 below:

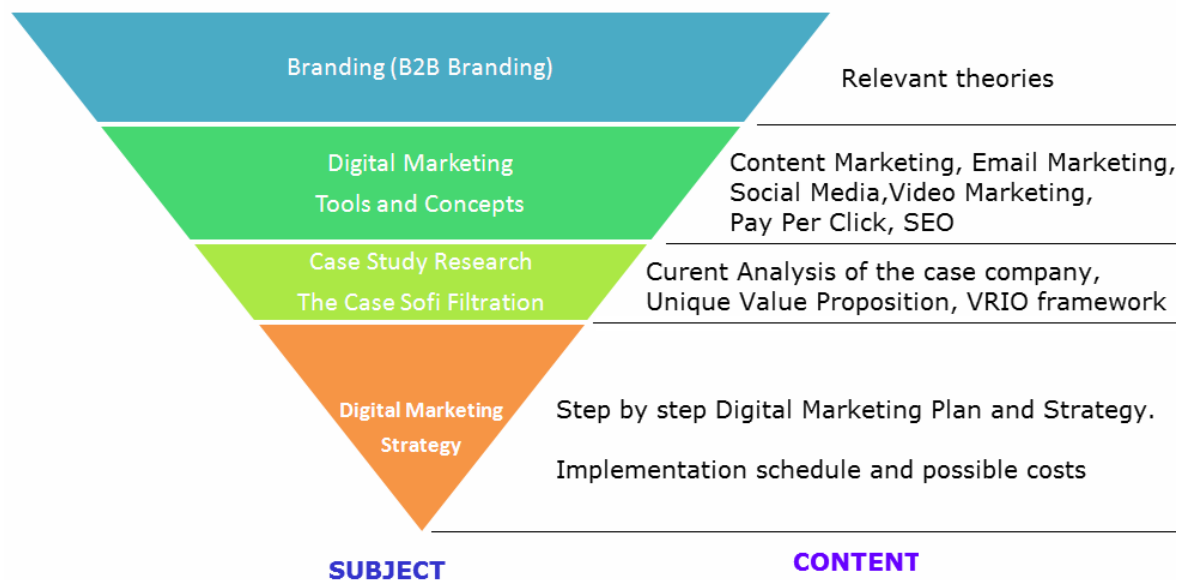


Figure 1. Thesis framework

The reversed pyramid in figure 1 illustrates the top to bottom process utilized in this paper. The first two stages look into the relevant literature theories and concepts while the third phase describes the research method chosen and the case company. The top

of the pyramid looks to provide a comprehensive digital marketing strategy and plan for Sofi Filtration. Additionally the findings of this study will look into a possible schedule and costs associated with adopting and implementing such a plan.

2.1 Branding

Several definitions of the term “brand” should give us an understanding on what it means for companies as well as for customers. “A brand is more than just a company name or a product. It is a promise to all the stakeholders involved.” This definition came out of the HAAGA-HELIA course, Leading by Branding, that I took in 2013. This course served as case study for Sofi Filtration and will be outlined later in this study.

This promise has to be accurate and consistent with the message as well as it should add some value to the buyer. Last but not least, according to Blackcoffee.com: “A brand is an experience living at the intersection of promise and expectation. (Blackcoffee.com, 2014.)



Figure 2. Brand, promise, expectation. Blackcoffee.com 2014

Chernatony & McDonald (2003, 25) define the term brand as follows:

“A successful brand is an identifiable product, service, person or place, augmented in such a way that the buyer or user perceives relevant, unique added values which match their needs most closely. Furthermore, its success results from being able to sustain these added values in the face of competition.”

Furthermore, Chiaravalle & Schenk (2007, 21) state that: “A brand, in essence, is a promise about who you are and what benefits you deliver that gets reinforced every single time people come in contact with any facet of you or your business.”

According to Chernatony & McDonald 2003 a brand can have four levels or characteristics. The **generic** level is when a product or service meets the basic needs of the user. This generic level is also the characteristic that can be copied by competition. To differentiate from their competitors companies will add value to their brand to meet the **expected** level. The expected level of a product or service can be its functionality, purchase conditions, pricing and availability. However with the increased competition and constant change in consumer behavior, a brand needs to be **augmented** and add even more value for the users. Being able to meet the emotional needs as well as the functional ones companies can better meet the clients' needs and hence the brand increases its value. The **potential** of a brand comes with additional experience about the consumers and market. The functional and nonfunctional characteristics of a brand become less of a focus for brand owners and this leaves room for the potential level of the brand. In the long run, the success of a brand depends to a great extent to the ability of a company to add value to a product or service above the basic functional characteristics.

The brand is a sign of ownership and has to appeal to stakeholders as well as to consumers. When developing the brand identity a unique selling proposition takes shape and this might define the success or the failure of a brand. The unique selling proposition should be consistent and should bring some value to the customers. In today's changing environment and with constant shifts in consumer behavior, differentiation alone cannot be the sole argument of a brand. Added value to a service or product combined with a well-established image can stand out in front of competitors. The success of a brand will depend more on the brand's capability to offer unique benefits and fulfilling real customer needs than just by having a great name and logo. Depending on packaging, advertising, naming or presenting a product a brand can be perceived differently by consumers. The consumer perceives a brand in its own way and at the same time other consumers influence and add to the perception of the brand. Additionally, the functionality of a product or service can be viewed as another aspect of differentiation.

Within certain industries and products categories, consumers put a significant value on the brand as this brand gives them the possibility to find themselves in the values and

image of that particular brand. This gives consumers the opportunity to communicate emotions, status and other things, to their peers or community. Consumers typically will follow brands that have a clear personality and can match with their values, personality and state of mind. (Chernatony & McDonald 2003, 26-32.)

Besides being a promise a brand acts as a risk reducer for the consumer. For example, the uncertainty regarding a brand can be a powerful decision in purchasing or not purchasing a brand. Consumers have to make a choice in deciding if a new brand will work, deliver as promised as well as thinking of what their peer group will say about the new brand. More and more research points to the fact that one of the favorite methods used by buyers to reduce risk is their reliance on the company's reputation. All these concerns can be mitigated through successful and effective brand marketing techniques where the perceived risk is minimal. In B2B business, companies have to find out what are the risk concerns of the potential buyer and then develop a solution that emphasizes their brand capabilities to reduce or completely eliminate that risk.

With increased competition and fast technological advancements, brands have more difficulties to keep up with copycats and inferior products. As mentioned before, a brand is a promise. This promise extends beyond the name and the product. Quality, safety, performance, price and service are a promise too. Brands have to find a balance between fighting unfair competition and keeping the initial promise alive. (Chernatony & McDonald 2003, 41-48.)

2.2 Business to business (B2B) branding

The definition of a brand provided in the previous chapter by Chernatony & McDonald applies to business to business branding as well. Where consumer marketing looks at satisfying the needs of the people who purchase brands to satisfy a personal need, organizational marketing looks into engaging other companies to sell or buy products and services.

B2B marketers have a much bigger role in the client's strategy as they need to understand how their product or service can best help each client. In today's business environment people have less and less time on their hands and hence companies will have to target their clients with well-crafted propositions that are beneficial for them and

their companies. Many buyers see the added value of a brand coming from dealing with a certain company as well as from the benefits of a specific product or service. (Chernatony & McDonald 2003, 160-161.)

2.3 Organizational (B2B) marketing

Slightly different than consumer marketing, organizational marketing has several characteristics that point to the importance of branding in business to business relationships. The similarities between products as well as the fact that innovation does not stay novel for long time, make branding an important aspect of the marketing strategy of a company. Therefore, the product -centric business model changes to a more promise-centric model.

The following characteristics are specific to B2B marketing and add a strong emphasis on the branding aspect:

- More people are involved in the buying process. This makes it more difficult for the brand marketer to identify the brand attributes that are valuable to the people involved in the purchasing chain.
- The time for making a purchase decision is far greater than in consumer business. Sales and buying cycles often take longer times in B2B as the companies seek to evaluate their buying decision more carefully. Technical, functional and cost are some of the concerns that companies are seeking to clarify before making a purchase decision.
- Because there is more time involved in the buying process, the buyer in B2B tends to be far more rational compared to the buyer in the consumer business. This rationality can be attributed also to the fact that in business to business there are much higher risks involved than in consumer businesses and hence the longer decision process.
- Buyers in B2B are seeking long term relationships with their suppliers.

In preparing their value proposition, brand marketers need to understand which departments will be affected by their brand as well as the buying process and decision mechanism of that company. In most cases, companies have a buying center that deals

with the buying process. “A buying center, sometimes called a decision-making unit, is a group of people from different departments who are involved in the evaluation and selection of a particular brand.” (Chernatony & McDonald 2003, 163-171.)

Table 1. Buying center members and their roles according to Chernatony & McDonald 2003

Buying center member	Role
User	People who are using the brand. They usually start the buying process and write the requirement specifications.
Influencers	Can be internal influencers or external ones. They can have direct influence by defining brand criteria or indirect influence by providing information informally. External influencers can be consultants who are hired to define brand specifications or evaluate different brands. These people are sometimes difficult to identify.
Deciders	Typically the upper management people like vice presidents or CEO's.
Buyers	Typically the buyers are a formal group of people employed internally or externally in a purchasing department. Amongst other duties, this group of people has the task to get the best price possible for the chosen product or service.
Gatekeepers	This group of people controls the flow of information into the buying center. The gatekeepers tend to play a more central role in the early stage of the buying process.

Understanding who these people are and what are the roles they play within the buying center, can help brand marketers to better position their brand within that organization. (Chernatony & McDonald 2003, 175.)

In the white paper, Content Marketing For Industrial Companies, Thomasnet gives some good insights into content marketing for industrial companies. The company argues that industrial companies need in the same amount name recognition or branding as much as consumer companies do. Content marketing, helps companies to communicate to their target audience the value, expertise and knowledge of their brand. Companies, who look to purchase and industrial good, are looking for other companies that can provide that product but that can also show a high level of expertise and knowledge about that industry.

A typical industrial buying process according to Thomasnet 2013 is described in figure 3. This process addresses the need of communicating with all parties involved in the process.





Role	 THE USER	 THE FINANCER	 THE BOSS	 THE INFLUENCER
This Person	Will ultimately use or apply your product or service.	Oversees the budget.	Is responsible for the final decision – even if they don't make it (see below).	Has a unique and specialized interest; may come from any level or area of the organization.
Cares About	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well it works. • How it will affect his/her job. • Your customer service. • Technical specs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate cost. • Long-term ROI. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliability. • Your reputation and history. • Their own reputation - it's on the line if you don't deliver as promised. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could be anything: legal and liability issues, logistics, sustainability, safety, etc.

Figure 3. Industrial buying process. Business.thomasnet.com 2013

All of the people involved in the buying process of industrial goods have their own channels of getting information and therefore a company needs to address that communication as best as it can. According to Thomasnet this engagement can be successfully achieved through a series of digital tools and mediums such as:

- microblogging sites (Twitter, LinkedIn)
- articles, blog posts and industry specific journals
- news releases about company products, achievements and knowledge

- videos and white papers
- company website, blog and customer testimonials
- industry and trade magazines submissions
- newsletters and social media.

Each of these tools has its own strengths and using them in the right combination is a matter of trial and error. The entire Thomasnet white paper can be downloaded for free from the company website and the link to that page can be found in the reference section of this paper. The impact of content marketing takes time to build and implement and the results may be very few in the beginning. However, for content marketing to work and to yield the desired results a minimum of two requirements is needed: commitment and consistency.

2.4 Digital marketing tools and concepts

Constant developments in technology and the evolution of marketing have changed the way marketers reach their customers. Additionally, the internet is changing the way we communicate, interact and read information. People are no longer constrained by a physical medium to create, share and read information.

Digital marketing defines as:

The promotion of products or brands via one or more forms of electronic media. For example, advertising mediums that might be used as part of the digital marketing strategy of a business could include promotional efforts made via the Internet, social media, mobile phones and electronic billboards, as well as via digital and television and radio channels. (BusinessDictionary.com, 2014.)

The Financial Times Lexicon 2014 has a similar definition of digital marketing: “The marketing of products or services using digital channels to reach consumers. The key objective is to promote brands through various forms of digital media.”

Digital marketing goes beyond the traditional marketing and can include internet marketing, mobile phones, social media marketing, display advertising, search engine marketing, email marketing and basically any type of digital media. As we will see in the

following chapters there are several digital marketing tools that can help a company to strengthen its brand and establish a digital presence. Additionally, these tools can help in building a community around the company's' brand as well as potentially increase its revenue.

For any business, the decision to have or not to have a digital strategy can be narrowed down to two questions: Is my audience online or is it going to be online? And are my services, brand and products suitable to for digital marketing? If the answer to the first question is YES, then the company who asked it needs to seriously consider some sort of digital marketing. Prospects and existing customers may use some form of digital technology to search, research or purchase the products and services a company has to offer. Engaging these people in the format they are looking for information is a key factor in establishing any kind of relationship with them. When it comes to the second question, the answer is debatable but has a tendency to be yes. This is because most people would answer yes to the first question and hence the second one leans towards the same answer. It is only natural for any company to promote its products and services in an environment where its customers and prospects are active too. Venturing in a new territory can be challenging and at the same time costly. It can cause good and sometimes it can cause damage.

Ryan & Jones 2009, argue that every digital strategy foundation should be solid and should contain the following components:

- **Knowing your business:** This stage will be very helpful in establishing if the business is ready for digital marketing. Additionally, it can reveal the level of readiness and preparedness of the company when it comes to technology, infrastructure and knowledge of digital marketing.
- **Know your competition:** This is an important component that will help the company to find out who are its main competitors as well as if these are the same online as offline. The analysis in this stage could reveal what the competition is doing right and wrong in the digital scene. Additionally it can bring out what the competition is not doing at all and where the company can act on missed opportunities. The analysis at this level can make a huge difference when it comes to how the company presents itself in the online landscape. By entering the online community, a company

ventures into a global online scene and does not limit itself to the local market. The beauty of the digital marketing is that it can reach the whole world if that is a strategy of the company.

- **Know your customers:** Defining and understanding the target audience and market before embarking on a digital journey can save time and money in the long term. Understanding how the customers use, consume and interact with digital content can be of great value as it will define the relationship between the company and the audience in the digital environment.
- **Know what you want to achieve:** A clear vision and strategy on what one wants to accomplish is a must before approaching the concept of digital marketing. According to the authors, this is an important step in laying a solid foundation for the digital marketing strategy of a company. Setting clear goals in the beginning, before starting the digital project, will help the company to have a clear vision on what it wants to achieve. The goals set in advance can then serve as measurement or progress for a particular campaign.
- **Know how you're doing:** One of the biggest advantages of digital marketing is that, compared to many forms of marketing, results can be measured more accurately and in a variety of forms. Basically one can track and monitor everything that happens online and compare the progress against predefined goals set in the previous step. Defining from the beginning the key performance indicators (KPI's) can help with the measuring and monitoring of a specific digital campaign. Evaluating the KPI's from time to time gives the opportunity to adjust and modify the campaign for even better results. This is an ongoing process and will end only if one decides that digital marketing is not to be pursued anymore. A good example on how one can test and tweak an ad or a landing page is the A/B split test. In this case two versions of an ad or webpage are created. Over a defined period of time the two versions are monitored and measured. At the end of the measurement period one can clearly see which ad/website version performed better. This practice can and should be repeated at constant intervals depending on the business you are in. (Ryan & Jones, 2009, 22-24.)

2.5 Content Marketing

Since the inception of the internet companies as well as individuals have tried to get more out of their online presence and interact with each other. Businesses have soon discovered that customers can be approached in a new way. This has evolved over time and continues to evolve out of a simple and basic need: communication. In most cases, companies and people get together online for social or business related communication. The internet can be viewed as the most modern communication tool available today. It provides products, services, education, communication tools and much more to anyone who wishes to take advantage of it. One of the most important aspects of the internet is that it is neutral and cannot be owned. However, one can safely say that the internet has become controlled by the people who are part of it. This leads to the assumption that an online presence, regardless if it is for personal or commercial purpose, can influence and be influenced.

The online presence of a company/individual can be looked at, simply through the content it produces and offers. This particular type of communication is called content marketing and has become the main theme in marketing communications in the last decade. According to Marketo's eBook: *Creating Content that Sells*, content marketing is defined as: "The creation and sharing of relevant content for the purpose of solving a problem and reinforcing brand messaging through thought leadership." (Marketo 2012, 4.)

Content marketing is a general term in today's digital environment. We can safely say that content marketing includes at least one if not all of the following examples:

- articles
- books/eBooks
- brochures/manuals
- case Studies
- information guides
- microsites/web pages
- online courses

- podcasts/video casts
- presentations
- product data sheets
- reference guides
- resource libraries
- RSS/XML Feeds
- videos
- webinars/webcasts
- white Papers
- widgets
- workbooks
- blogs
- email
- social media (content sharing)

All of the above tools have been designed and developed over time to convey a certain message to a specific audience. Furthermore, each of these tools is designed to achieve a particular goal. For the purpose of this paper only selected tools will be presented and discussed as some of the tools are not applicable to Sofi Filtration at this point in time or in the near future.

At the hearth of a digital presence for any company or private person is the website. The website is the electronic business card of a business or person. Additionally, most if not all of the digital marketing tools evolve around the company website. For example: email marketing leads people to the company website for a signup or purchase. Another example is the interaction in social media with the goal of driving traffic to the website for consumers to download a white paper or make a purchase. A simple and well-crafted website is essential for any company who wishes to do business in today's environment. As mentioned in section 1.5 this papers does not look at Sofi Filtration's website due to the vastness of the subject.

Content marketing does not only provide information about a certain product or service but it also drives traffic and customers to one's website or store. On top of that,

content marketing plays the role of an informant, so to speak, where the creator of content provides information about a topic he or she is an expert on. Considering the last statement, one could then safely say that content marketing has the role of educating the audience that it is designed for.

Content is designed to appeal to a certain audience. This means that when designing content, one should consider the characteristics and attributes of the audience. In 2014 I have attended *Content Strategy for Professionals: Engaging Audiences for Your Organization* organized by Northwestern University in Evanston, IL, United States. This particular free course is a virtual online curriculum offered through Coursera.org and because it is online it makes it easier to follow and attend. In this course I have learned for the first time about a “buyer persona” and its importance for any content strategy as well as for marketing in general. Here are some definitions that can help us understand this concept:

“Buyer personas are examples of the real buyers who influence or make decisions about the products, services or solutions you market. They are a tool that builds confidence in strategies to persuade buyers to choose you rather than a competitor or the status quo.” (Buyer Persona Institute, 2014.)

"Personas are archetypes that describe the various goals and observed behavior patterns among your potential users and customers." (Kim Goodwin 2009, 229.)

From the above definitions we can assume that a buyer persona is created from extensive market research as well as from data and insights from one’s customer base. Data can be gathered through surveys and interviews as well as digital analytics.

Some of the questions the buyer personas should answer include:

- What is the person’s job title and role?
- What type and size of company does he or she work for?
- What is the industry the person works in?
- What is the size of the budget?

- What is the problem that the person needs to solve?
- What is the person’s role in the buying process?
- What are the person’s aspirations and goals?
- Who is the ultimate decision maker/s?
- What criteria are most important to the person when looking for a solution?
- What are the factors that will motivate him or her to make a purchase?

One of the benefits of creating a buyer persona is that they can help considerably with content creation as well as with product development. Throughout my studies and research for this paper I have found that the buyer persona topic is extremely detailed. Therefore, I have designed a buyer persona template that should give Sofi Filtration an understanding on how this concept can add value to its brand as well as to help them create their first buyer persona. As with most things digital, there is no golden rule for success and circumstances can change quickly. Hence, it is important to analyze and review the buyer persona on a regular basis. In the case of Sofi Filtration a yearly review should be sufficient for the time being. The buyer persona template can be found in the attachments section of this paper as attachment 1.

The following sections look at studies that illustrate the growing importance of content marketing in business to business relationships, acquiring of new customers and in building brand awareness.

A guest blog post from 11 March 2013 on Arcticstartup.com provides a good understanding on the digital behavior and marketing efforts of Finnish start-up companies. The blog post “How Finnish Startups View Media Advertising (Infographic)” is based on research done by Timo Ketonen of Åbo Akademi University, and Kalle Snellman of Idean. As start-up companies have limited resources the typical marketing mix differs from company to company and country to country. In this case, the researched companies employed a marketing mix that included newsletters, company blogs, seminars and presentations, media releases, search engine optimization, social networks as well as articles in magazines, online news and video marketing. When it comes to paid advertising channels, search engine marketing and display advertising ranked the highest. When asked which channels had the most impact on each company’s success, own

website and newspaper coverage topped the list. More money and time would give these companies the opportunity to focus more on their media exposure as well as work on their company blog. The findings of this research are extremely well summarized in an infographic which can be found at the end of this paper as attachment 2.

The following survey was analyzed by Ayaz Nanji in the “Content Marketing Trends 2013: Video Popular, Blogs Valued, Social Measurement Lacking”. The article was published on MarketingProfs.com and it was written based on the “Content Marketing Trends 2013” survey which was sponsored by Skyword. The findings of the survey are somehow not surprising. The study was conducted based on data received from 217 marketing professionals (24% executive managers, 17% marketing managers/directors, 15% project managers, and the rest a mix of other titles). The company size varied from 41% with 1 to 100 employees to 17% with 101 to 500 employees, and 42% with 500+. (Ayaz Nanji, 2013.)

For a better understanding of the survey, I will explain it in several parts and look at each part individually.

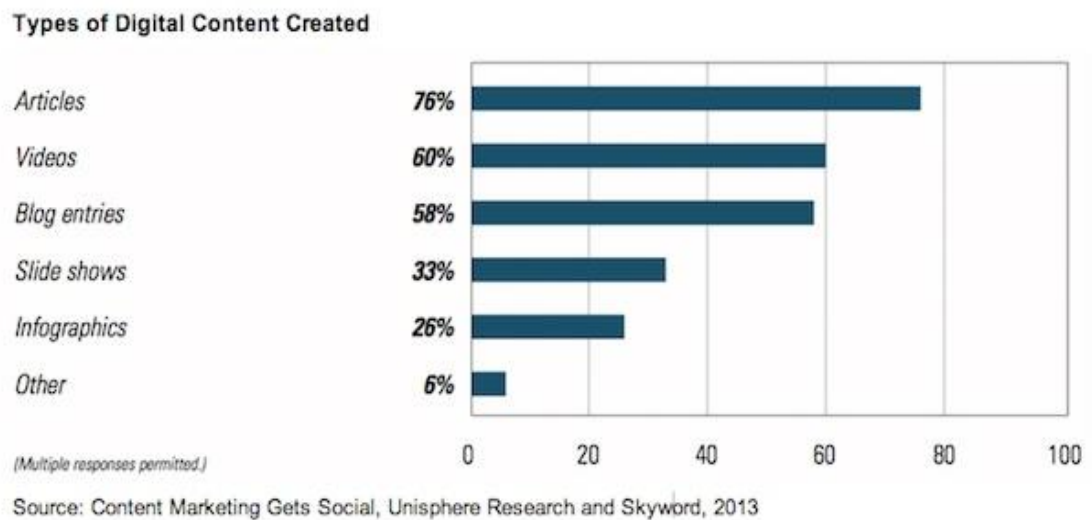


Figure 4. Types of digital content. Ayaz Nanji 2013. MarketingProfs.com

Most of the digital content comes from articles followed by videos and blogs. Slide shows and infographics have also gained in popularity even though they rank last in this particular survey. According to the survey, the main objective of creating content

was to engage customers and prospects. This eventually leads to the next natural step in content creation which is increasing the brand awareness on one's business.

Engaging customers and prospects was the main objective for content creation given by most respondents. Additionally it is interesting to note that the 71% of respondents answered that they are using social media to distribute their content. Furthermore, 84% of them use Facebook, 79% use Twitter, and 64% use LinkedIn to promote their content. Figure 5 gives an overall image on the objectives for content production.

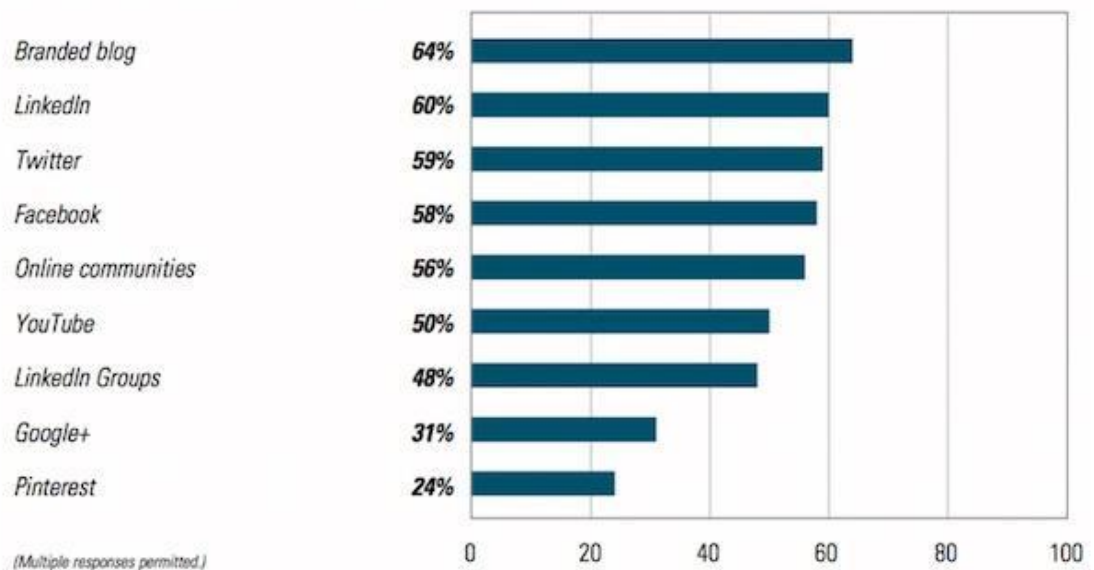


Figure 5. Objectives of content marketing programmes. Ayaz Nanji 2013. MarketingProf.com

The value of content marketing is one of the main reasons content creators even produce content. An interesting finding of this survey is that branded blogs represent one of the most used tools in content marketing. It seems that having a branded company blog pays off in the end. Figure 6 illustrates best the findings.

Value of Social Media Initiatives

(Percent rating value as either "extremely valuable" or "valuable")



(Multiple responses permitted.)

Source: Content Marketing Gets Social, Unisphere Research and Skyword, 2013

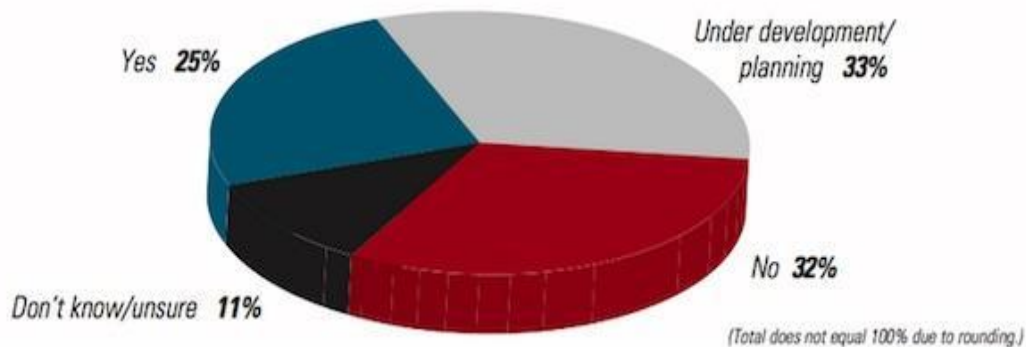
Figure 6. Value of social media initiatives. Ayaz Nanji 2013. MarketingProfcs.com

The frequency of content creation varies. Most respondents (53%) reported that they create 10 or less content marketing pieces a month. 44% of the questioned persons would like to increase their content output to something between 11 and 50 pieces per month. Additionally, 14% would like to increase their volume to create more than 50 pieces in a month. To fill in for the missing content, 78% said that they repost/re-share content.

What good is any campaign or action if it is not measured by the results it produces? Interestingly, most surveyed respondents measure social media performance using platform-specific metrics. This shows the increased importance of software specific platforms that can monitor and measure content marketing activities, especially on social media. Among the measurement metrics, marketers said they look at the levels of engagement (67% count comments or shares), website traffic (62%), and "likes" on Facebook or endorsements on LinkedIn (47%). However, only 42% of respondents connect social media content success directly to business gains. Additionally, 25% of the respondents are measuring the results down to the individual piece of content. Moreover, 33% have plans for monitoring and 32% are not even measuring the results of

social media. An even smaller number of respondents (31%) make a connection of their content marketing effort to their sales and revenue.

Are You Measuring Results of Social Media Content Down to Individual Pieces of Content?



Source: Content Marketing Gets Social, Unisphere Research and Skyword, 2013

Figure 7. Ayaz Nanji 2013. MarketingProfs.com

This first survey has given us some basic understanding regarding the content marketing situation in 2013. As content marketing is strongly dependent on human behavior, the situation can change considerably in 2014. Therefore, to better understand the direction of content marketing it is necessary to discuss the findings of another survey that sets the basis for the choice of content marketing tools in 2014. The study is relevant in our case as it shows the importance of content marketing in modern day's business and customer engagement. Furthermore, this study reveals some of the trends in content marketing for the coming year.

B2B Content Marketing: 2014 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends—North America was produced by Content Marketing Institute and MarketingProfs and sponsored by Brightcove. The survey is based on the findings from 1,217 respondents out of a total of 4,397 participants. The participants in this survey are mostly B2B marketers from North America. The distribution of the respondents by industry, company size and function is shown in figure8.

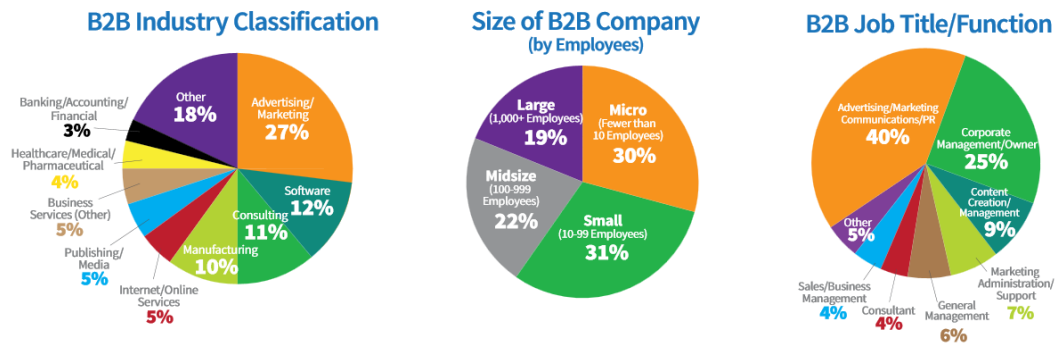


Figure 8. Respondents' distribution. MarketingProfs.com 2013.

For our case, figure 8 shows that there are a relative high number of small and micro enterprises that employ different tools of content marketing. As we will see from figure 9, social media will be the main focus for marketers when considering engaging their customers.

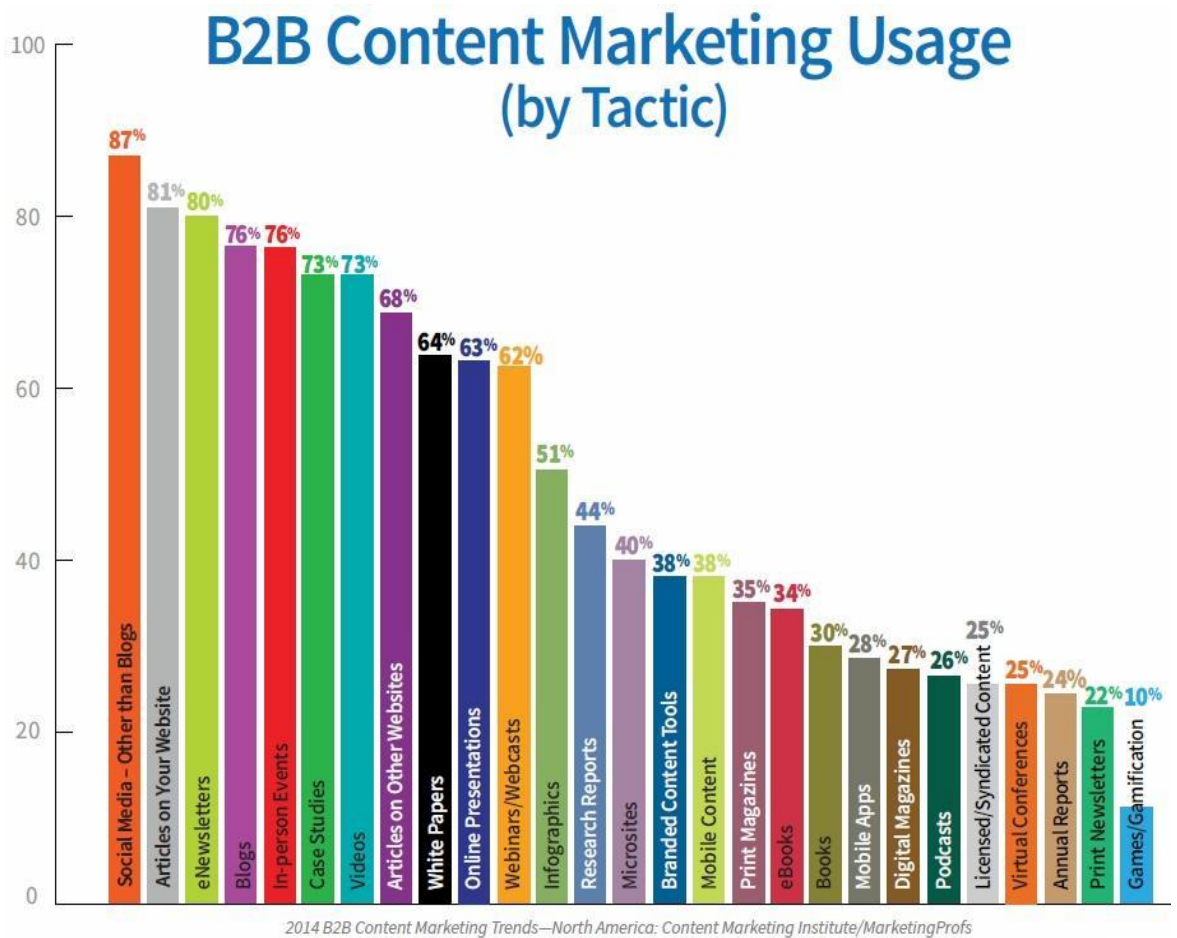
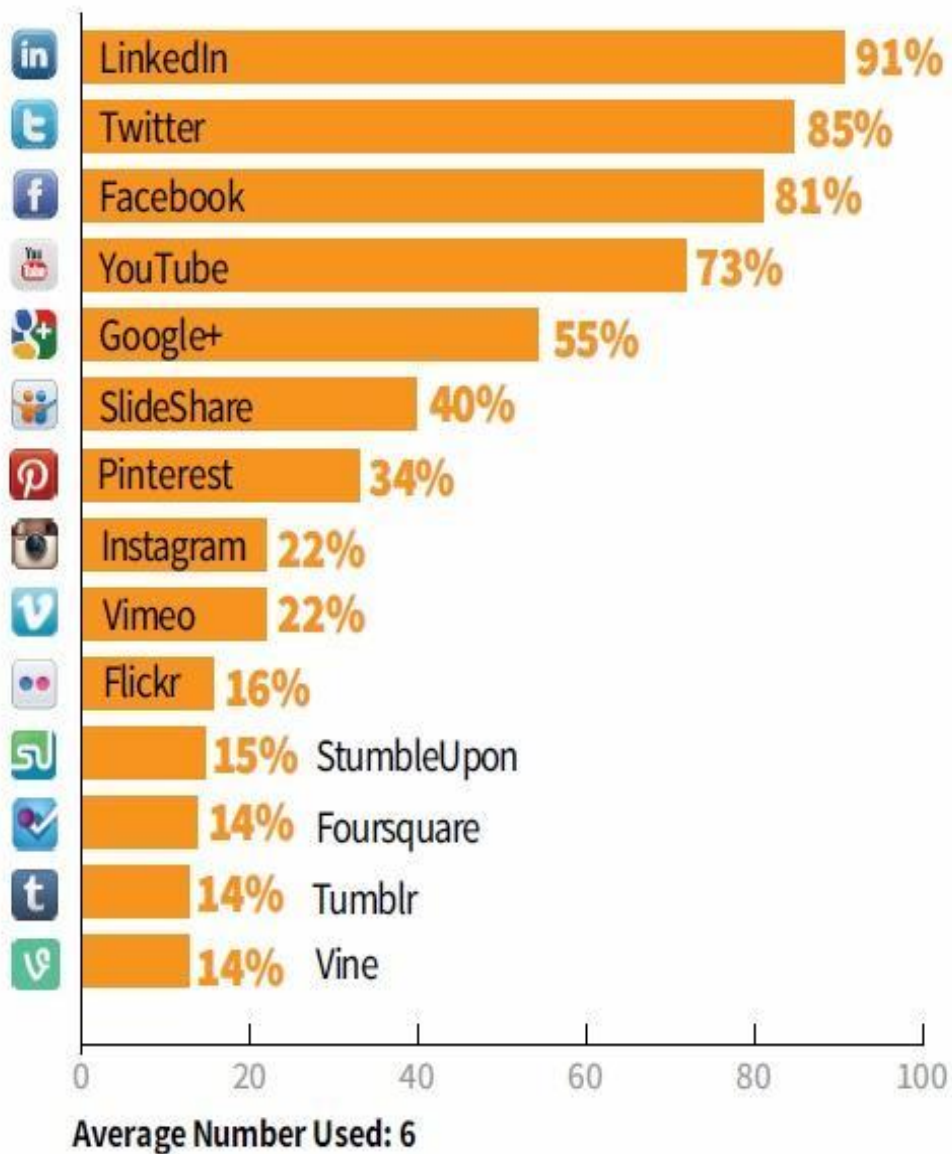


Figure 9. B2B content marketing usage. MarketingProfs.com 2013.

It is not a surprise that social media is at the top of the list when it comes to content marketing. However it is interesting to mention that some of the content is tightly related to social media. For example articles, videos, infographics and case studies are the bread and butter for social media marketing. Most of this content drives social media and furthermore builds communities around a particular brand or company.

An interesting finding of this survey that is worth paying attention to, especially for our company case is that according to the study; the use of infographics has increased most from last year. 51% of B2B respondents said they use infographics, compared with last year's 38%. Infographics are simple and yet very effective visual digital marketing tools that create awareness and help the creator to attract attention with information other than a sales pitch. This can lead the viewer to find out more about the topic or the particular company who created the infographic. It is relevant to note that LinkedIn is the most used social media platform by the marketers in this study. This is best illustrated in figure 10.

Percentage of B2B Marketers Who Use Various Social Media Sites to Distribute Content



2014 B2B Content Marketing Trends—North America: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs

Figure 10. Usage of social media sites for content distribution. MarketingProfs.com 2013.

It is necessary to make a small note about this benchmark. The first article was published on the first of October 2013. Only twelve days later the same website published a new article based on the one from the first of October but this time in the form of an infographic. This shows to me that the importance of the infographics has risen and

will continue to rise. The entire infographic of this survey can be found in the attachments section of this study as attachment 3.

As stated in this study, the development in technology and the change in consumer behavior forces companies to constantly rethink and redesign the way they reach their target audience. Adobe Inc. and Econsultancy Ltd have published their “Quarterly Digital Intelligence Briefing: 2014 Digital Trends”. The report is especially relevant to Sofi Filtration as it gives a very detailed overview of the digital marketing trends that will take shape this year. Furthermore, an important finding of the white paper is the fact that currently consumer expectations outpace corporate innovation. This alone tells about the speed things change in the digital landscape. The following figures have been chosen based on their relevance and importance to our case company. As we can see from figure 11, content marketing plays a central role for most of the respondents of the survey. Even though the respondents are split between company and agencies, it is remarkable to see that companies put content marketing as a top priority for 2014.

Figure 2: Which three digital-related areas are the top priorities for your organization (or for your clients) in 2014?

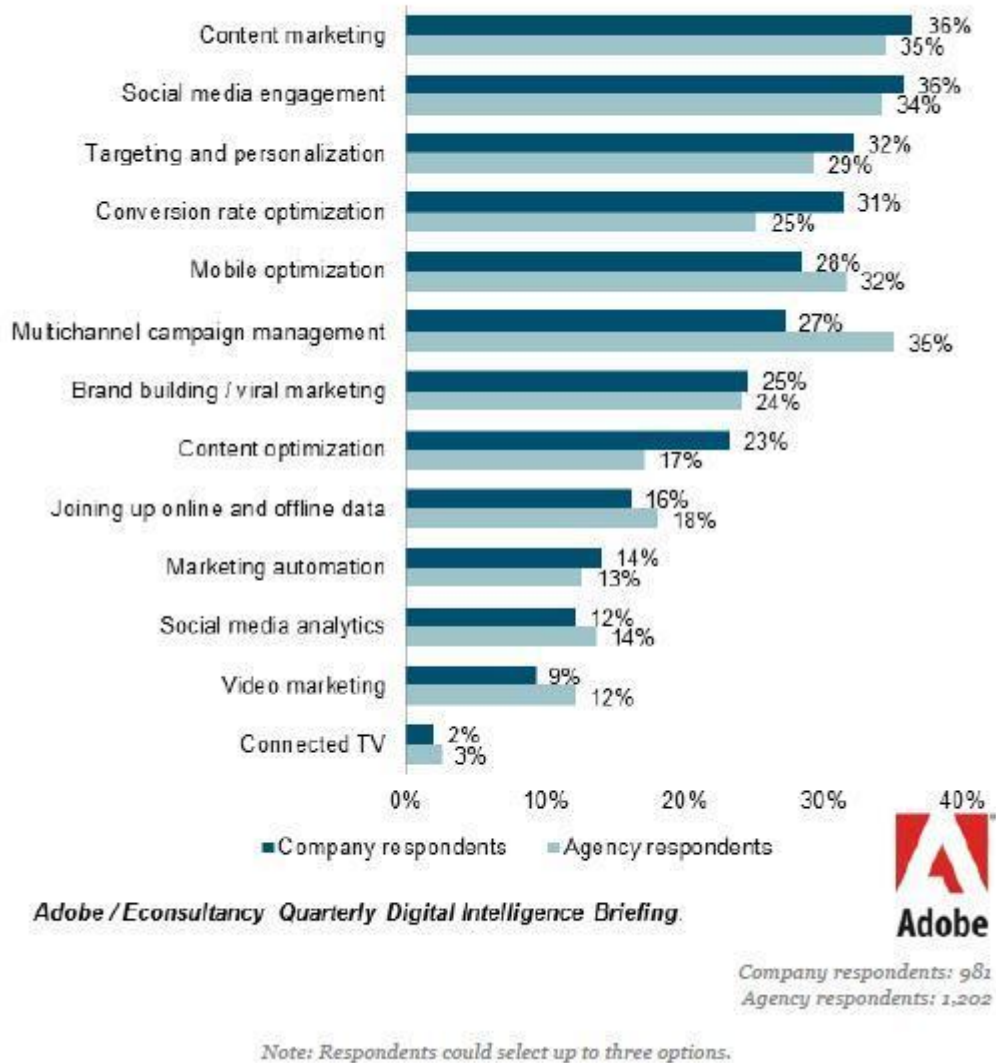


Figure 11. Digital priorities for 2014. Adobe / Econsultancy Quarterly Digital Intelligence Briefing

In figure 12 we can see that even when narrowed down to a single opportunity for 2014, companies still responded that content marketing will make most of their strategy to engage their target customers. Another interesting result of this survey is that mobile will play a bigger role in how people consume content as well as on how they search for products, services and information.

Content creators and companies have to understand that the way we consume content has changed along with technological development. For example: in the morning, content might be consumed on a mobile device or tablet while during the afternoon on a

desktop computer. This would imply that content creators would have to know their audience behavior in order to design and create their content for the right platform.

Company respondents – B2C vs B2B

Figure 3: Which one area is the single most exciting opportunity for your organization in 2014?

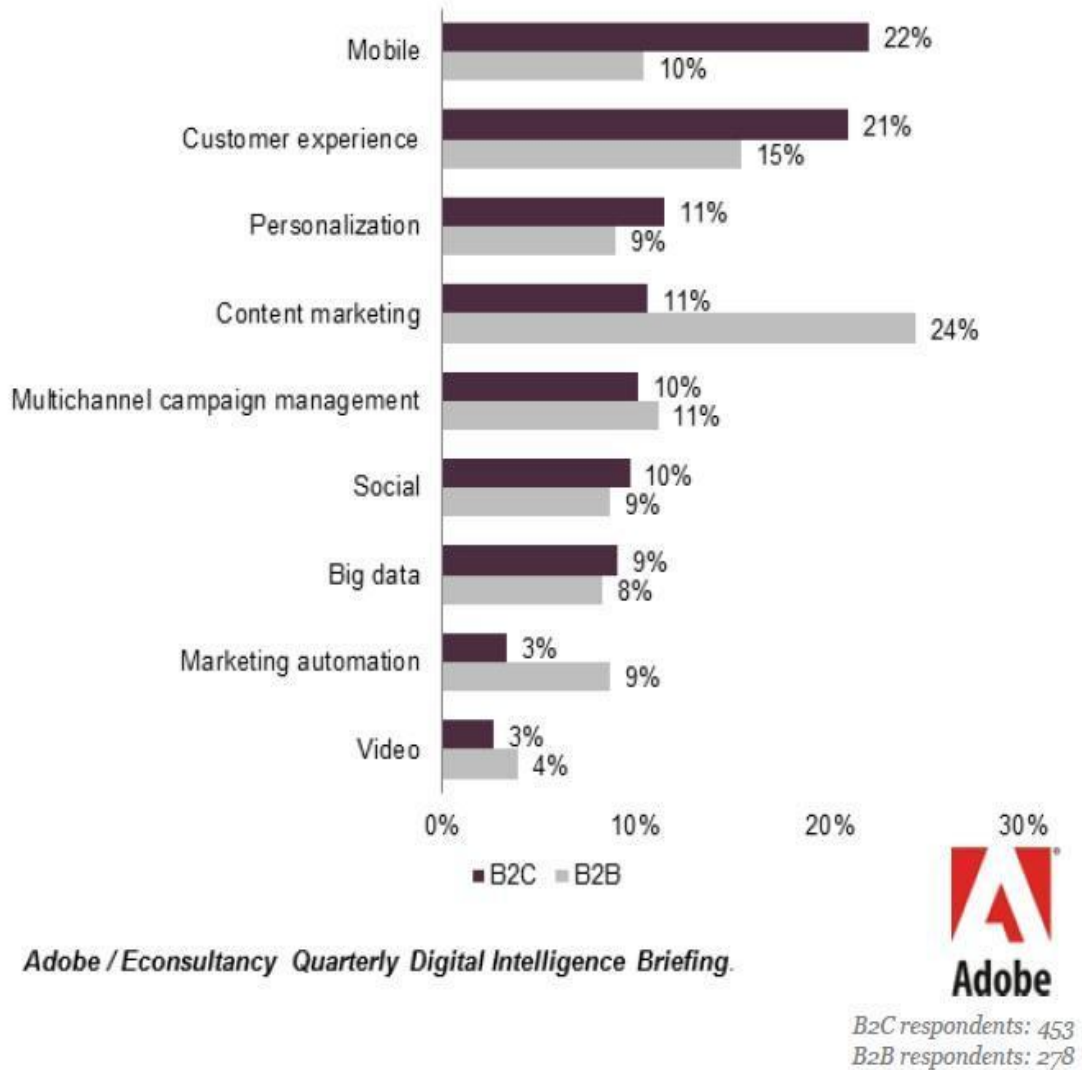


Figure 12. Most exciting opportunity for 2014. Adobe / Econsultancy Quarterly Digital Intelligence Briefing

Figure 13 is particularly relevant for this thesis as it emphasizes an important aspect of content and digital marketing which is consistency. The importance of being consistent in engaging an audience cannot be overstated. Consistency attracts and increases the followers base as well as it can decrease it based on the content, frequency and other factors.

Figure 13: Proportion of respondents saying that the following will be ‘very important’ for their or their clients’ digital marketing over the next few years.

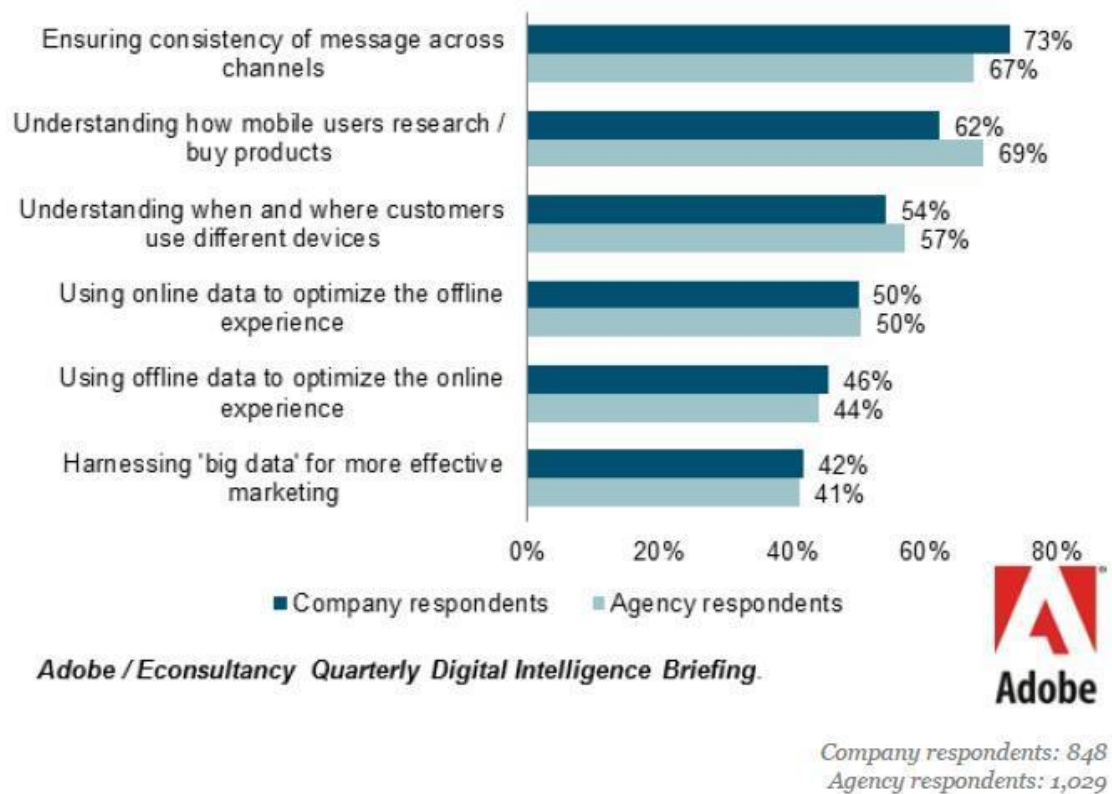


Figure 13. Important digital marketing aspects for the next years. Adobe / Econsultancy Quarterly Digital Intelligence Briefing

Another interesting aspect in figure 13 is that companies would also like to better understand how the customers utilize mobile technology to research products and services. Understanding customer behavior and the tools they use to consume content seems to be a hot topic for 2014.

Content marketing is by no means something that companies wish to overlook. We have seen how content creation can impact one’s business and brand. Small and medium businesses are beginning to realize that the consumer is the one who is setting the rules of the game. By engaging the audience with the right content, on the right platform and at the right time will be the challenge that all marketers have to face at some point.

2.6 Email marketing

Email marketing is still probably one of the most used digital marketing tools in the world. Before we dive into some practical examples, it is only natural to define the term email marketing.

According to Peter Drucker “The new information technology, internet and e-mail, have practically eliminated the physical costs of communications.” (Ryan & Jones, 2009, 132) Simms Jenkins, author of *The Truth about Email Marketing* puts it like this:” E-mail marketing has been called the original social networking tool and I could not agree more. If you think about social networks in general, email plays a large role in them.” (Ryan & Jones, 2009, 132.)

“E-mail marketing is a fusion of marketing savvy and imaginative copy. In its simplest form, it’s an e-mail sent to a customer list that usually contains a sales pitch and a ‘call to action” (Ryan & Jones, 2009, 134). This marketing tool can be seen as one of the most compelling elements in the digital marketing toolbox of a company. Additionally, email enables companies and individuals to communicate easily with internal and external stakeholders on a more personal level through a universally accepted digital medium. Ryan and Jones 2009 argue that customers or prospects will open an email containing a newsletter or promotion from a business as long as they recognize the brand. In fact they are even expecting to receive communication from that particular company. Additionally the receivers open the email trusting that it will contain something of value to them. The message has even a higher chance to be opened if the content is interesting and relevant enough to the targeted audience. (Ryan & Jones, 2009, 133-134.)

Examples of email marketing:

- a travel agency promoting a summer discount
- an airline informing of a new route or promoting season discounts
- a company informing business clients about a free seminar
- an electronics shop offering a discount code to be used at exclusively online purchasing;

- a sports center offering members a special offer that enables them to bring a friends of family for free;
- a soft drinks company encouraging people to download a game that integrates into the user's Facebook or Twitter profile .(Ryan & Jones, 2009, 134.)

The above mentioned examples are just a small part of what marketers can do with email marketing. On top of that, an email can be sent to customers or prospects just for keeping contact and offering free information.

Examples of simple non-commercial email marketing:

- a law firm keeping in touch with its customers by informing them about changes in legislation;
- a weekly, monthly or quarterly newsletter from a company that contains interesting materials of industry specific news: water news, mining news, etc.
- a daily digest or breaking-news alert from an online newspaper;
- a book publisher using email marketing to promote free e-books or book launching events

Email is a very cost-effective communications tool and if used efficiently it can deliver a great return on investment (ROI). A regular email sent to a few recipients can only be sent either with an email client such as Microsoft Outlook or through a web client such as Gmail. However, when a company wants to reach a wider audience it might want to utilize some customized email marketing tools available on the market. These tools can be software based and are installed on the local computer or are cloud based and operated on a software-as-a-service (SAAS). (Ryan & Jones, 2009, 135.)

For the purpose of this paper I will focus on SAAS cloud based solutions. These tools can enable a company to craft a message, design a template or use a predefined one and send it to a large mailing list. Probably to most valuable and interesting feature of these types of tools is the fact that they are able to track and monitor an email campaign. Some of these tracking tools show: how many people opened, deleted or responded to the email. Additionally it can sort out the outdated email addresses.

Email marketing has come a long way since the first email was sent sometime in the seventies. Naturally there are many factors that can contribute to the success or failure of an email marketing campaign. Based on my research and professional experience, I have chosen to describe only several factors such as design, content and tools.

Email design can be looked from the same angle as website design. It has to look good, be informative and functional. Most email clients and cloud based solutions use HTML or Hyper Text Markup Language and this is because HTML looks better and it is widely used a standard. With HTML designed emails, one can send rich text, stunning designs and pictures as well as embed different video formats. Besides the HTML, emails can be sent as text version and this is also recommended as sometimes the firewalls of recipients might block some HTML content. Most cloud based solutions create a text version besides the HTML version of the email. This will enable the end recipient to choose which way he/she wants to view the email.

Images are an important tool to convey the desired message. However, too many pictures can be confusing and many email clients can block visual content allowing only text. This can result in a bad display of the email and thus making it uninteresting for the reader. Images should enhance the message and not be the message. The first lines of the email should already be engaging to captivate the reader's attention and interest to open and read through. The design of the email should be in line with the overall brand and image of the company. Being consistent throughout the whole digital spectrum creates more credibility among the existing and potential clients. When planning for the email campaign, it is important to take into consideration how people are consuming content. Mobile devices display content differently than desktop computers and therefore the design plays an important role. Most cloud marketing email tools as well as software based ones give the possibility to view the design in both mobile and desktop. There are some legal aspects that need to be addressed and included in the design of the email template. When sending a promotional email to a prospect or existing client, one should include an "unsubscribe" link to give the recipients the opportunity to opt out from future correspondence. According to Ryan & Jones (2009, 144) the unsubscribe button or link is in fact a legal requirement in most countries. Addi-

tionally, it is important to include the company's privacy policy. This is relevant especially when one tracks the behavior of the recipients.

An email sent out with big attachments can usually block the recipient's server or in a worst case it does not even arrive at the destination. Therefore, attachments of big resource consuming files such as videos or high resolution pictures are best put in the email as a link. Furthermore, this will feel less promotional and will give the receiver the option to choose to download the document. Before pushing the "send" button, it is recommended to send a couple of test emails to team members or friends. This will validate the content, design and deliverability of the email. Monitoring and tracking what happens with an email campaign gives clues about the success of the campaign but at the same time it provides great insights on how the receivers of that email behave. Number of opens, number of clicks per link, downloads or sign up are just a few of the metrics that can be monitored. The tracking also serves as guidance for future campaigns. Last but not least, it is essential to point out that the email content should match the content of the website or the landing page it points to. Regardless of the scope of the campaign, the content has to be consistent and accurate. (Ryan & Jones, 2009, 143-147.)

The email list is another relevant aspect of email marketing. The list can be compiled in several ways. One of the most popular is the "subscribe to our newsletter" button or form from the company website. In fact, a call to action through the company website is one of the most common ways to gather email contacts. It can be a "download our white paper" or "download our free e-book" or as simple as subscribing to a newsletter or service. The key part here is that the subscribers give their contact details voluntarily. An email added to the list without the consent of the email address owner is considered illegal in most parts of the world. To put it even more blunt: it is SPAM. Additionally, email lists can be put together from trade shows or events organized by the company or where the company participated and people voluntarily provided their contact details. People with whom there was an initial email exchange as well as existing customers can be added to email lists. These lists are built over time and it is best to let the list grow organically.

The following example looks at an email marketing tool that I have worked with it and I found it extremely easy to use and cost effective. MailChimp is a cloud based email marketing tool that enables companies to design, send and monitor powerful email campaigns. When it comes to monitoring, MailChimp has its own tracking tools. However for the purpose of integration and management of digital metrics, MailChimp gives the possibility of integration with Google Analytics. Best part of this tool, is that up to two thousand subscribers and twelve thousand emails sent per month, the service is completely free. This is especially important for a small company such as Sofi Filtration.

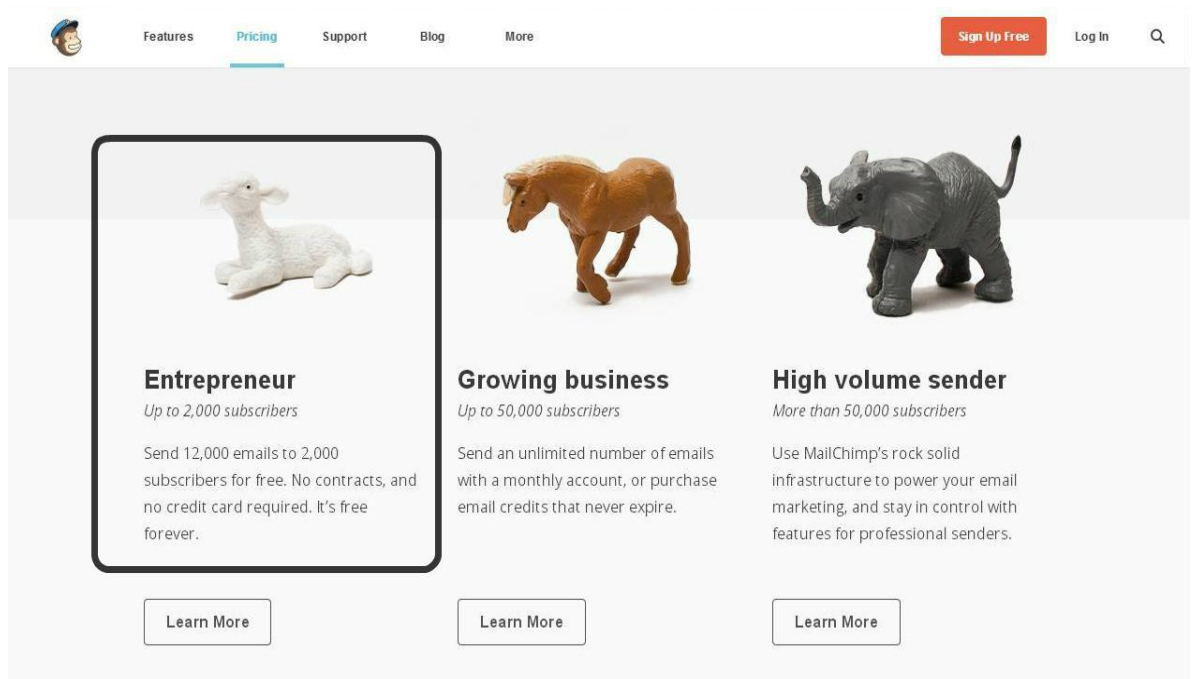


Figure 14. MailChimp pricing options. MailChimp.com

The MailChimp dashboard, shown in figure 15, gives a very detailed overview of the current status of the campaign. We can easily see the open rate, click rate, how many bounced back and how many people unsubscribed from the mailing list.

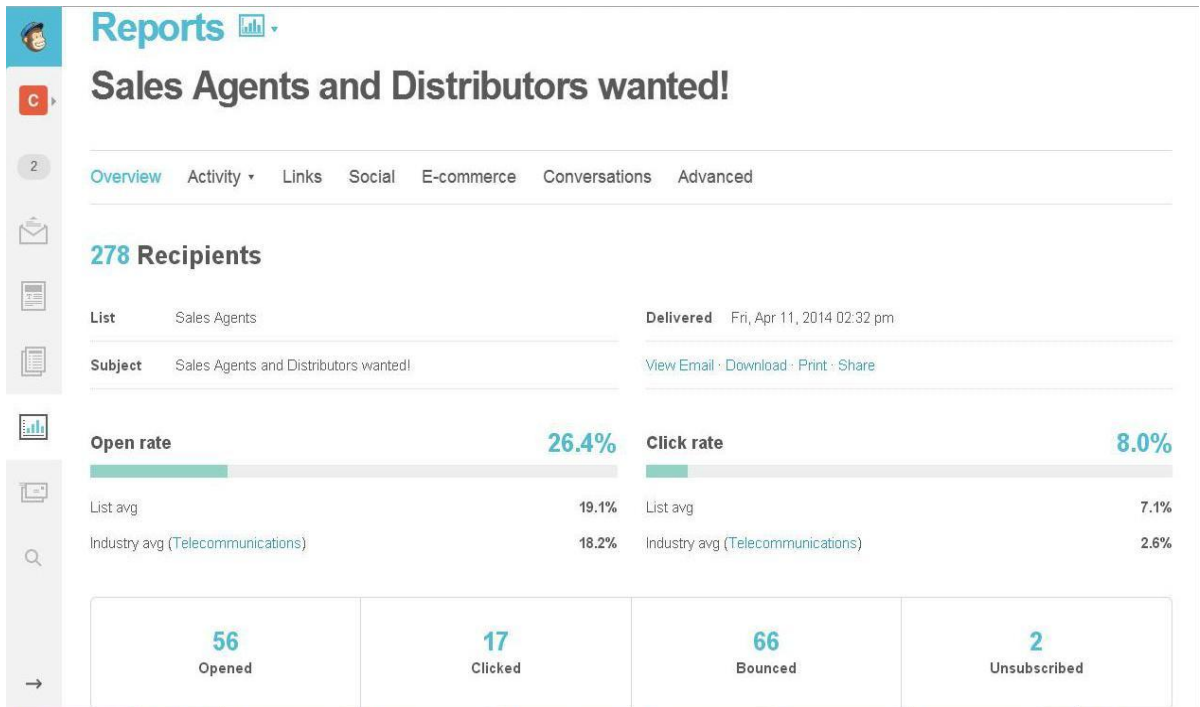


Figure 15. MailChimp dashboard current campaign view. MailChimp.com

Figure 16 gives an overview of the top subscribers ranked based on how many times they have opened the newsletter. Additionally, there is an overview of the most clicked links in the newsletter. This is an important metric as it tells where the reader landed and what he/she did after that.

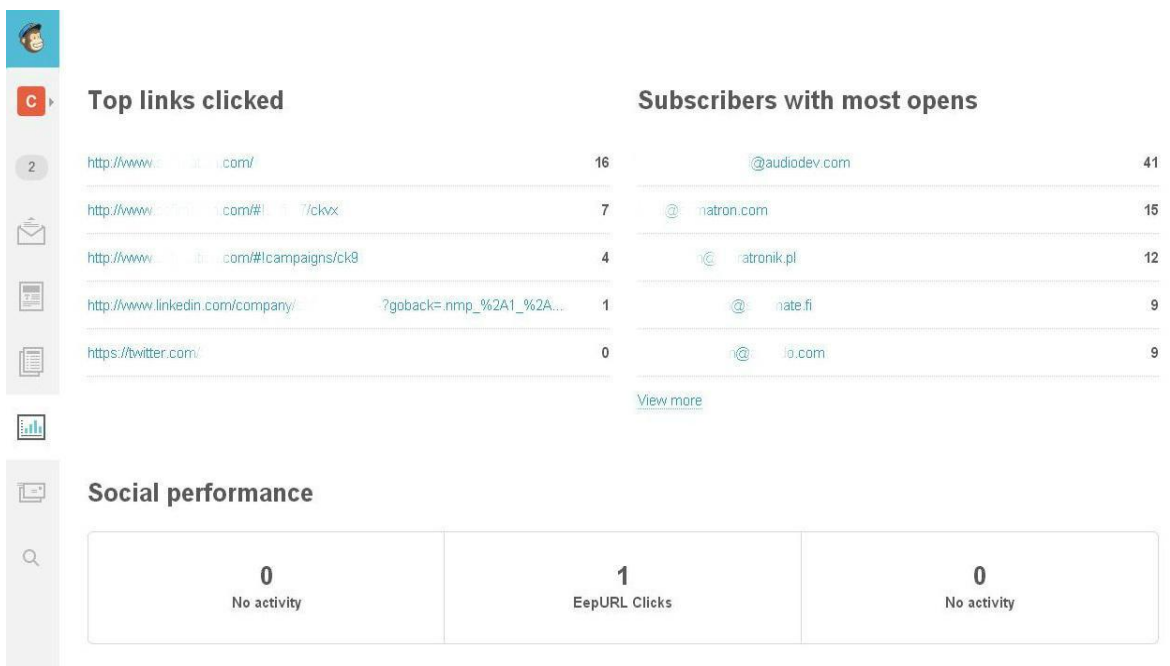


Figure 16. MailChimp open and click details view. MailChimp.com

Performance over twenty four hour period, shown here in figure 17, gives a good overview of the last twenty-four hours. This metric could be especially helpful if the campaign has tight key performance indicators or the revenue expectations are high.

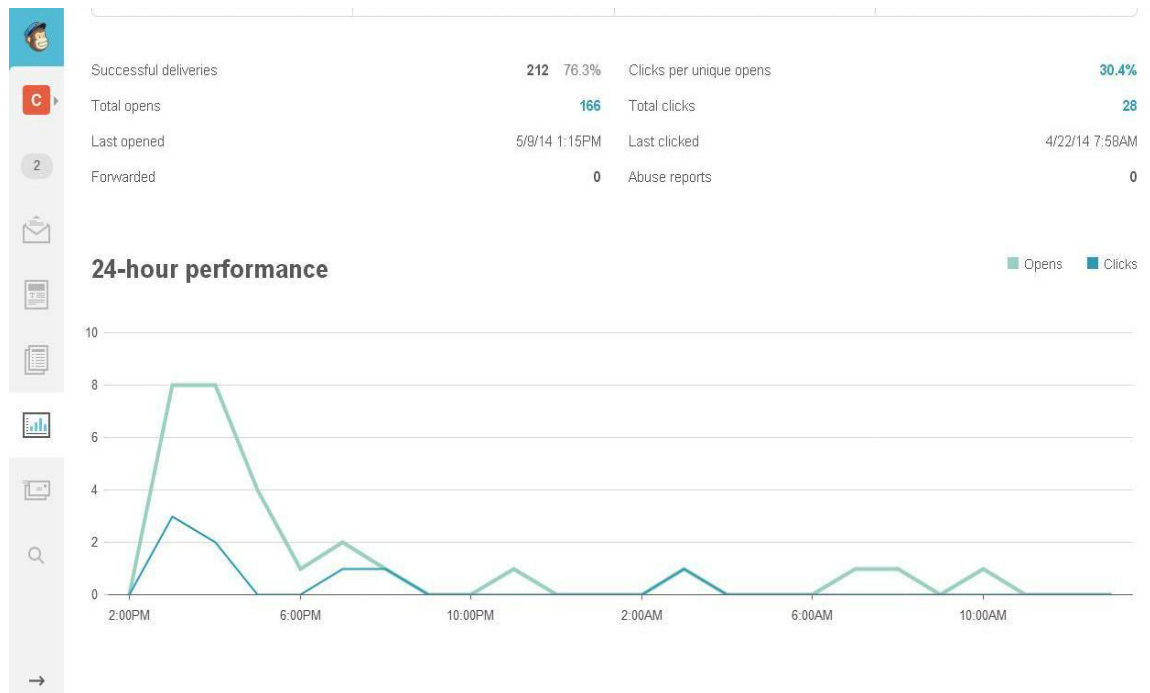


Figure 17. MailChimp twenty-four hour metrics. MailChimp.com

In figure 18, there is an overview of the demographics for the subscribers.

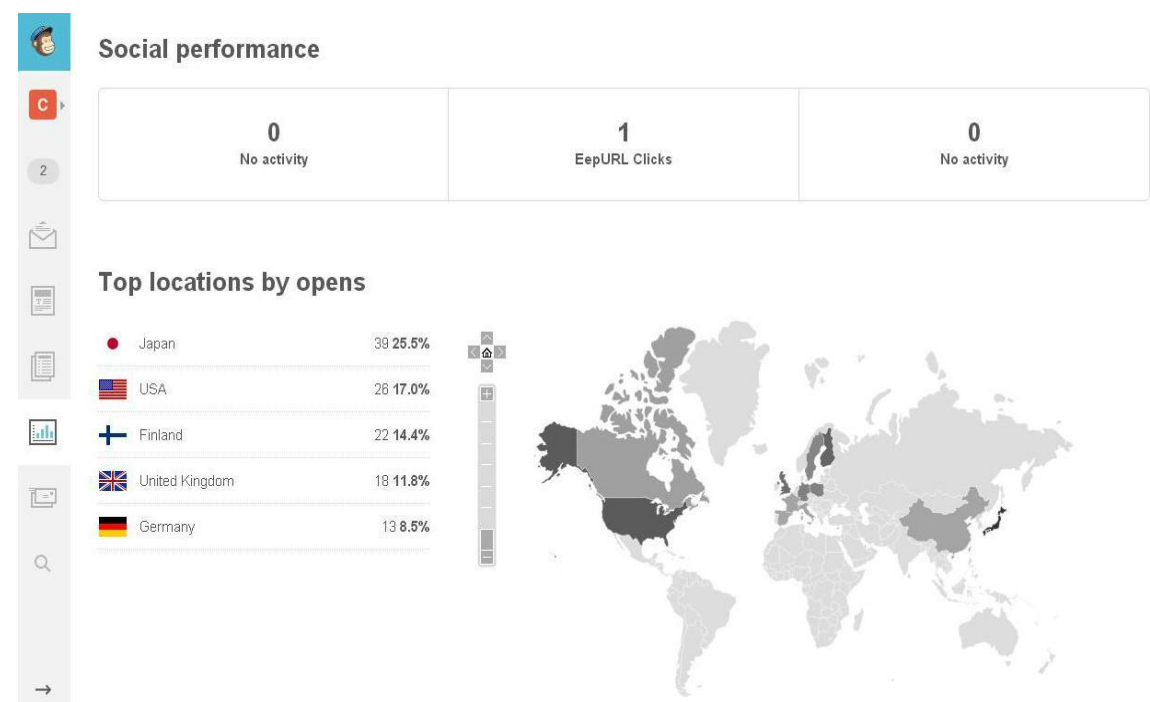


Figure 18. MailChimp demographics. MailChimp.com

To address the increasing number of people who consume content on mobile devices, MailChimp offers two different views of its newsletter. This is done automatically when you edit the newsletter in HTML format. It gives the opportunity to visualize the end result in both desktop and mobile view. On top of the versatility and ease, MailChimp has powerful mobile apps for Android and Apple devices. This literally puts the email marketing campaign into the marketer's hand.

2.7 Social media

Social media is a critical part of a larger, more complete sales, service, communications, and marketing strategy that reflects and adapts to markets and the people who define them. (Solis, p.9, 2010.)

According Ryan & Jones (2009, 152) “social media is a term for web-based software and services that allow users to come together online and exchange, discuss, communicate and participate in any form of social interaction.”

The interaction can take place between two or more people and it can be in a variety of forms such as text, images, audio and video. The type of interaction usually depends on the goal of that particular communication. It can be communication of new content or simply the sharing of existing content. The content can include and is not limited to: reviewing and rating products, services and brands as well as discussing different topics. With the explosion of social media, there is practically no limit for the content that is created and shared across the internet. With the help of social media, people from totally different parts of the globe can share their personal interests, passions and experiences as well as their professional expertise. (Ryan & Jones, 2009, 152.)

Everybody can talk to everybody and therefore it is important, especially for businesses to join the conversation. The effectiveness of social media is impacted by the development of new technologies as well as by the change in human behavior. Therefore, understanding modern human behavior and realizing that more and more people are using a smartphone, for example, is essential in developing the social digital strategy of a company.

IAB Europe in partnership with TNS Infratest and Google aim to quantify the role of online in the consumer journey from research to purchase. These companies have set up a survey to find out more about the consumer journey that can end up with a purchase. In this project we can find some interesting data to support the decision to embrace or not the digital. The research was done in order to better understand the past purchase behaviors as well as a perspective on how consumers interact with the internet to search for information that will influence their purchase decisions. The research was carried out throughout the whole world on selected countries and territories. The sample size was set to a minimum of n-2500 in each country and thus makes the whole survey more representative. The information about the methodology as well as more data can be found on the website of the Consumer Barometer 2013. The example shown in figure 19 represents the percentage of people who used the internet in different ways and with different tools to research a product before making a buying decision.

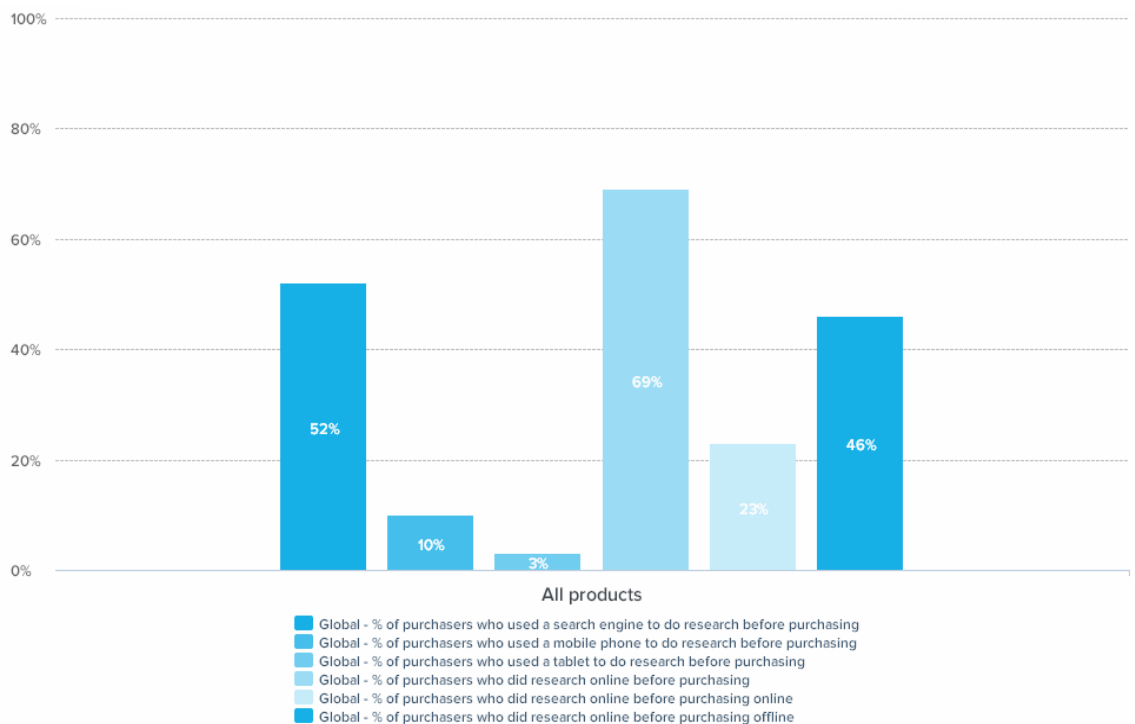


Figure 19. Online behavior before purchase decision. Consumer Barometer 2013

In 2013, 52% of the global surveyed population used a search engine to look for a product or service. More impressive is that 69% of the respondents used the internet

to research a product or service. 46% of the respondents did an online research before buying offline and only 23% purchased online after researching on the internet.

Online research can have many more components than just a search engine. Social media has changed the way people research for products and services. People share their experiences with products and services and this adds to the buying experience of others. As a personal example, I never book a hotel or buy any software without checking the reviews written by others. The better the reviews, the higher the chance that one buys the product or service.

The importance of social media cannot be ignored or overlooked. Different types of social media are available for individual users as well as for any type of company and industry. In our case, a small technology company, the social media aspect is more specialized and hence not all strategies and tools can be successfully applied. Additionally, I believe that the social media movement is still in its infancy and all of the techniques and tactics that are suggested to be working and yielding results may be very well obsolete in the very near future.

There is no limit on how deep one can go with the social media involvement. The depth depends on several factors such as business type, customer segment, goals and strategy. From all the reasons companies should join the social media train I have picked a few ones that have been recommended by Ryan & Jones (2009, 156.)

By joining social media companies can:

- Get up to date information. In the digital age, information can be viewed as a precious and valuable commodity. Customer perception of a brand, product or service can be of real value for the digital strategy of a company.
- Build a name. Proactive engagement through social media and other social channels can considerably increase the brand awareness and show the community the level of knowledge and expertise of a company.
- Influence the crowd from within. Identifying and engaging with the most active influencers in one industry or market can lead to increased visibility and brand aware-

ness. There are usually a small number of persons that are most active in the industry. These influencers have already gained a reputation on the online stage and their opinion about a brand, product or service is appreciated among the online community.

- Pass the word. This is probably one of the most powerful attributes of social media. This online “word-of mouth” has the ability to spread the message about a brand throughout the online world and this at a very high speed. If interesting enough the content created by a company will be shared and spread throughout the community regardless if it is news or a video.
- Crowdsourcing is a powerful tool that puts the intelligence of the crowd to your disposal. If a company tries to solve a problem that affects many, sometimes sharing the problem or part of it with the crowd can bring amazing new solutions as well as it can raise the brand awareness and recognition among that community. On top of that, this type of community problem solving is affordable and it can also give some good insights on the wants and needs of the customers.

Social media has evolved over time and it continues to evolve. There are many types of social media or social interaction. However, for the purpose of this paper, I will only look at the ones that are relevant for Sofi Filtration.

Forums and discussion boards are probably the oldest form of social interaction. Since the inception of the internet and moreover with its growth, people gathered in groups to share and discuss common interests as well as asking for help or advice. Some popular discussion boards are Yahoo groups and Google groups. Groups and forums still play an important role in digital marketing as it gives several hands on benefits such as:

- customer insights
- reputation gain
- warning system for negative comments, trends and early mitigation
- brand and product promotion through links and signatures. (Ryan & Jones, 2009, 159.)

Blogs are modern tools that enable content creators to express a unique and representative point of view on a topic. According to Ryan & Jones (2009, 164), a blog is “a medium of self-expression and communication.” The tool has evolved fast and has managed to cause some major changes in digital media. This is in part due to the easiness to start a blog and basically anyone can be their own publisher. One can start writing in minutes on free platforms such as Blogger or WordPress. Additionally, a blog can be set up on a company website. Blogs can be used to write about passions, frustrations, news, opinions or simply sharing some knowledge. Similar to news and articles, blogs build audiences, attract followers and the content is shared with the world. The more interesting a blog the faster it spreads through the word of mouth.

Ryan & Jones (2009, 164) argue that getting familiar with the most popular blogs in one’s industry could be the one of the most valuable digital actions a company can do. This is due to the fact that the people behind these blogs are the biggest online influencers. Therefore, finding out who they are, what are their interests and engaging them in a respectful relationship can have a tremendous impact on a company brand. Blogs have the power to create massive exposure for any topic as well as to build a long lasting relationship with customers. Additionally, by keeping a blog a company can share its expertise and drive traffic to its site. A blog can be long or short depending on the scope and purpose of it. There is already a lot of information out there and people tend to look for more concise and informative rather than long and detailed content. A short post of 500-1000 words tends to be the most popular length. Figure 20 gives us an idea of the length for a blog by topic:

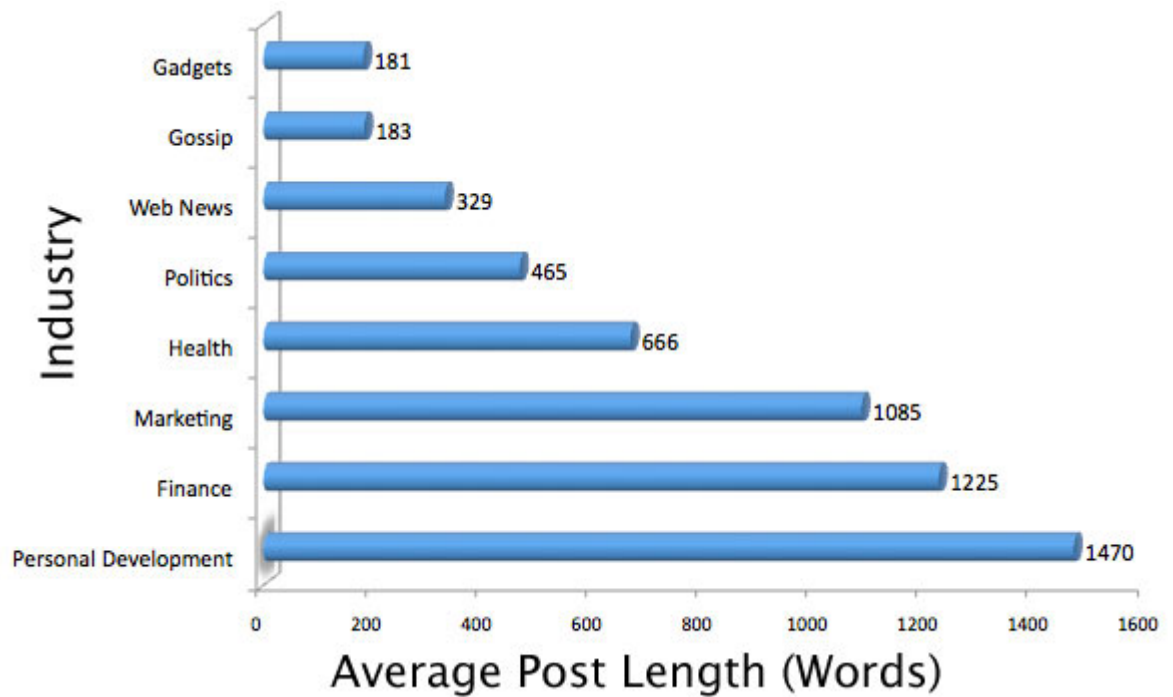


Figure 20. Average post length for a blog. Viperchill.com

After a careful research, I found out that there are no particular rules for the length of a blog post. It all depends on what one wants to achieve with the post and accordingly writes more or less content. As with any generated content, printed or online, one of the main success factors can be attributed to consistency.

In search for some key success factors for starting and creating a blog I came across three online sources (Mashable.com, Socialmediaexaminer.com and Startupnation.com) that provide some of the best advice regarding blog writing. Based on these resources I have put together the following suggestions that can greatly help our case company to start, maintain and be successful with blogging.

- Define the audience and strategy. It is useful to know who the target audience is and what content is most appealing to it. Having a strategy can help with the goals and direction.
- Add value to the community by becoming an expert in the industry. People will often look for enriching and informative content that can add value to their life experience. The content should inspire and engage the audience at all time.
- Divide a topic into many blog posts using different angles. For example in the first blog post on the topic one can create a step by step guide for the product/service.

Different segments, such as small companies, can be approached in another post. An infographic on the topic can be a third blog post and the list can continue. Like this, a repetitive feeling is missing even though the subject of the post seems to be the same.

- Invite industry experts and influencers/guests to write for your blog. This will add a fresh voice and tone to the content keeping it interesting for the audience.
- Promotion of the content is an essential part of the blogging process. Social media is a great way to let people know that there is another blogger out there. If the content is engaging and valuable enough, users will share and distribute it for free. Social sharing options right from the blog post will make distribution on social media much easier.
- Engaging the audience will add to the credibility of the author. Furthermore, it shows that the author really cares about its audience.
- Capture the leads from the blog. Email sign-ups for updates on future blog posts can generate leads and increase the customer base.
- Consistency is probably the most important aspect of any digital activity and this is especially true for blogging.

Micro-blogging sites are the late comers at the digital media party. Platforms such as Twitter have taken the popular mobile short text message and transformed it into a powerful tool for socialization and engagement. Similar to the text message, micro-blogging sites allow short messages that are usually less than 160 characters. Whereas the text message is a personal communication tool where two people have a conversation, a micro-blogging site engages a large number of people simultaneously. Twitter is the most popular platform but Facebook, Google+ and LinkedIn have similar features called “status update” where one can share short messages with the audience. These status updates can be commented upon and shared with others.

The benefits of joining a micro-blogging platform can be:

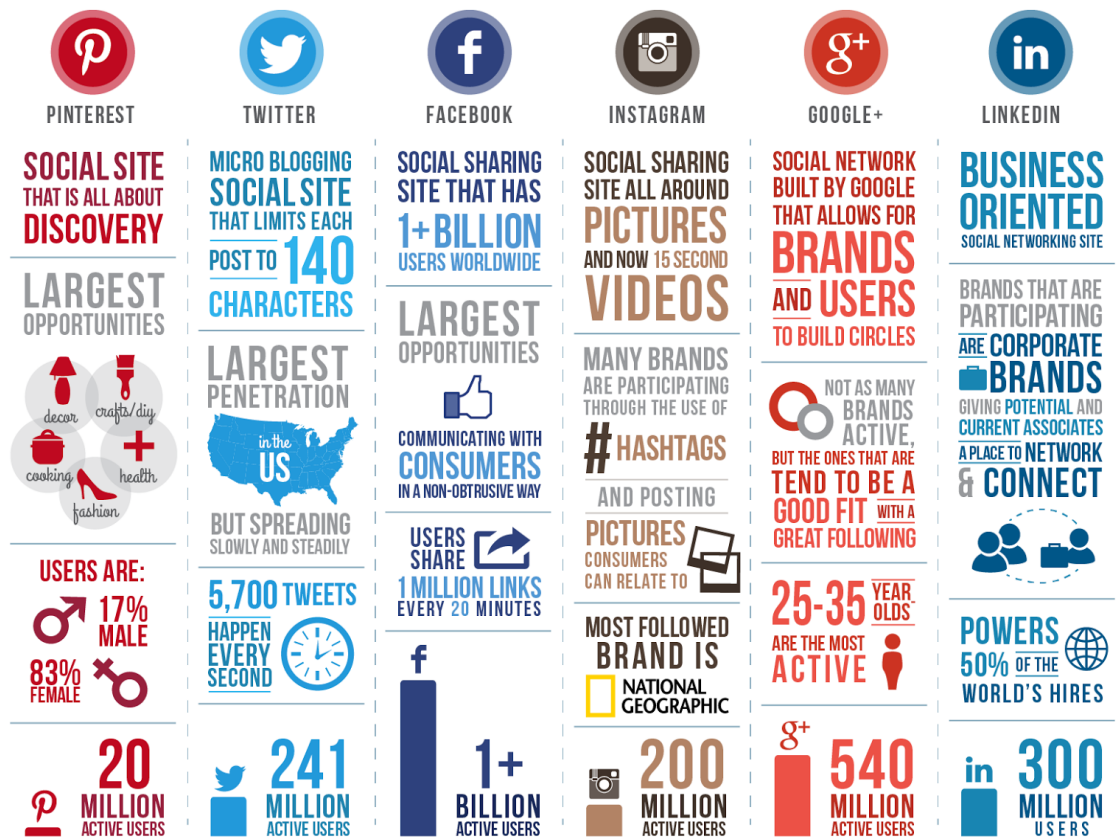
- Understanding the influencers and opinion formers.
- Getting the latest updates from the industry and market.
- Communicating with the audience.

- Building traffic to the company blog and website.
- Building brand awareness and expert recognition (Ryan & Jones, 2008, 166.).

Media sharing sites have become increasingly popular especially because of the development in technology. The type of media can range from pictures and presentations to videos. Some examples of media sharing sites are: YouTube for videos, Flickr for pictures and Slideshare for presentations. Slideshare is particularly appealing as a media sharing site as anyone can upload a company or product presentation and make it available to the public. This increases the visibility of the company in search engines and it gives more options when it comes to search engine optimization. Videos are powerful tools that can convey a large amount of information in a short time. Like in the previous type of social media, here too people can comment and share their favorite media. Some of the benefits of media sharing sites are:

- Information on consumer preferences. Insights on what the people like or dislike.
- Rapid distribution of digital content.
- Mass exposure to digital content.(Ryan & Jones, 2009, 160.)

Social media sharing sites have become one of the most widely used tools for connecting people around the world. Basically, social network sites let users to connect with people they know, usually friends, and share experiences. Some of these experiences are life events, pictures, videos, interests and dislikes. The number of users is growing rapidly and there is no way to know where this is leading. In a recent blog post, Leverage New Age Media has put together an infographic that illustrates the landscape of the major platforms of social media. Figure 21 is a great representation of different types of social media sites that are most popular today.



Statistics as of 4.25.2014. Designed by: Leverage - leveragenewagemedia.com

Figure 21. Social media statistics. LeverageNewAgeMedia.com

Some of the benefits of using social media sites include:

- advertising products, events and services
- distribution of content
- community building
- online brand awareness and reputation
- engagement with customers
- social insights on what customers want and need
- market research (Ryan & Jones, 2009, 163.)

Social media is all about engagement. Like with any other human relationship, common sense and respect play an important role. With every action taken on social media, there is a call for reaction. People are not interested in a new platform where companies just sell their products, but in interesting, informative and fun content that can enrich their life and experience. (Ryan & Jones, 2009, 169.)

From a monetization perspective social media is still in a “trial and error” phase. This means that there is a huge amount of data gathered and companies are still figuring out how to make the best of it. Companies such as Facebook and LinkedIn are experimenting with paid ads and their success is still debated and very much industry specific.

A good example regarding the use of social media comes from Mr. Hakala’s master thesis, “Utilizing social media in the early stage internationalization process of a firm Case: a Finnish Cleantech start-up”, where LinkedIn was utilized as an experiment to search and qualify sales agents for Sofi Filtration. Over a period of several months, from 15 of December 2012 to 10 of March 2013, Sofi Filtration actively posted short messages on different LinkedIn industry specific groups. The messages were a call for sales agents and distributors. The results of this action were pretty positive for Sofi Filtration. Besides identifying potential sales agents and partners, Sofi Filtration managed to increase the traffic to their website from 2.12 unique visitors per day before the campaign to 17 unique visitors per day during the LinkedIn campaign. (Hakala, 2013.)

Like in any other field, the Social Media phenomenon has come to have best practices or at least some unwritten rules that almost everyone agrees upon. In the white paper, “50 Tried and True Social Insights”, Marketo, a marketing automation software company, compiled insights from over 2000 professionals during a 15 city tour across America. These insights could be viewed as unwritten rules or best practices when using social media for business purposes. Nonetheless, these rules can be applied to social media practices for personal use as well. The study presents the view of professionals who make use of social media in their professional life. As much as all of these points are valid for our company case, I will focus in this chapter only on a few of them that I believe are most relevant. The reader can find the entire Marketo white paper in the attachments section as attachment 4.

According to Lyndsey McDermand, marketing-communication coordinator at YSI.inc, companies should have a social media policy in place. Furthermore, consistency and the ability to control one’s messages is one of the key success factors in social media practices. I choose this example from Lyndsey as the company she represents is active

in the water treatment business and this is related to Sofi-Filtration. YSI is a developer and manufacturer of sensors, instruments, software, and data collection platforms for environmental water quality monitoring and testing. Currently, the water treatment business is not one of the sexiest topics you can find in social media and in the news. This can be because the players in this industry still believe that their field is somehow special and anyone interested in their topic needs to be a scientist or an engineer. The research led me to check the Facebook page of YSI ltd. My surprise was that they had 3206 likes (on 2.10.2013 when I checked) and there were 741 people talking about their page. Additionally, the company has 2751 followers on Twitter. These numbers do not mean anything when compared with a music star Facebook pages or a popular consumer brand. However, the numbers are significant for a company with a topic which becomes more interesting every day.

One of the aspects that caught my attention when looking at YSI's Facebook page was the fact that most of their posts were not product related but water matters related. This leads me to believe that one can have a social media presence and build a community around it even without advertising its products every second of the day. The community built around a message, a vision or a brand, regardless of who is the initiator, can have positive impacts on the brand and the initiator as well.

The YSI LinkedIn page has 51 followers (on 2.10.2013) when I checked. This idea of community building where the company is sharing more than just its products is confirmed also by Jenna Keegan, marketing specialist, CORE Security. In the same Marketo white paper, Jenna adds that by injecting humor and sharing their corporate daily lives has helped their brand considerably. Core Security has 1025 Facebook likes and 19 are talking about them. The data is from 2.10.2013 when I checked. On the other hand their LinkedIn page has 2532 followers. I have picked these two companies as both of them are fairly technical. One comes from the same industry as Sofi Filtration and the other one from the IT field. It seems that both of them utilize social media to drive business.

As we will see from other examples, creating content and engaging with your audience is important in the digital age. Furthermore, one principal theme that came out of the

Marketo white paper was that the content should be consistent. Consistency is one of the main themes in social media. "Content is King! And it must be relevant to your target audience" said Heidi Gilmore, Marketing Communications at CloudBees. CloudBees has 886 likes on Facebook and 827 followers on LinkedIn on 2.10.2013.

More and more companies are using social media to generate leads and to generate ROI. This is confirmed by numerous surveys and studies that I came recently across and out of which I picked up a few that are relevant to our case study.

In her article "Small Businesses Find ROI in Social Media [Infographic]", Veronica Maria Jarski 2013 analyzes and comments on data from a study done by Manta.com on more than 1200 small business owners. This survey revealed the fact that social media interest and participation is increasing among small businesses. "Nearly 50% of SMBs have increased time spent on social media compared to a year ago," Manta says. "More than one in three small-business owners dedicate between one and three hours each week managing their social media channels, while 10% spend more time." Furthermore, 36% of the respondents have as a primary goal the acquiring and engaging of new customers when using social media. Lead generations and referrals came for 19% of the questioned persons on the second place. Additional findings from this survey regarding small businesses and social media show that:

- 53% of businesses say they have one person dedicated to social media activities at the company.
- 39% of businesses say they see a return on investment from social media activities.
- 79% of small-business owners are optimistic about their business prospects in the second quarter of 2013.

The whole infographic detailing the study done by Manta can be found in the attachments section of this paper as attachment 5.

Kathleen Davis 2013 published a short review and an infographic on how to use social media to find new customers. The article was published on Entrepreneur.com and the infographic is based on a survey done by Whishpond, a maker of social-media market-

ing applications. The infographic shows how companies use social media to generate more leads and eventually get more customers. Furthermore, the illustration presents some techniques that companies used to attract customers and engage them. The entire infographic can be found in the attachments section of this paper as attachment 6.

Another great infographic realized by Whishpond shows the top benefits achieved in social media by marketers in 2013. The data is based on a study done by Social Media Examiner that was conducted on more than three thousand marketers. The whole infographic can be found in the attachments section of this paper as attachment 7.

Salesforce is one of the most innovative cloud solutions companies that exist right now. In one of their publications, 50 Social Media Best Practices, Salesforce offers great tips for marketers who wish to improve their social media results and engagement. It is interesting to note that throughout the whole eBook there are calls to action to test their product. There are some similarities between some of the ideas presented in this chapter based on Ryan & Jones and the Salesforce eBook and hence I will not repeat them. However, I find the eBook to be a comprehensive summary of social media best practices and hence it is attached to this paper as attachment 8.

2.8 Video Marketing

One of the fast and easy ways to express your passion and personality is a video. The video tool has become increasingly one of the most used channels in marketing. In modern times, when content is everywhere and time to consume content is practically inexistent, videos seem to solve several problems by conveying more information in less time. This makes videos a very attractive tool for marketers and individuals. Specialized websites for video hosting and sharing such as YouTube, Vimeo and Dailymotion have changed the video marketing landscape forever. According to YouTube statistics there are over 1 billion unique users who visit YouTube each month. Furthermore, over 6 billion hours of videos are viewed each month on YouTube and 100 hours of video are uploaded to the platform every minute. (YouTube 2014.)

Considering the statistics of YouTube alone, one can safely say that video has taken the world by storm. From personal experience in social media, videos are the most shared content as well as the content that gets the highest attention from users.

According to Lee Fredriksen 2014, the cost of producing a video for the web ranges from nothing for an amateur-do-it-yourself type of production to over 1 million dollars for the top level production. For a small company with limited financial resources, the do it yourself approach might seem more appealing. Solutions such as Apple's iMovie (Apple 2014) and TechSmith's Camtasia Studio (TechSmith 2014) can provide great results at very low cost.

An example of low cost video work can be found on Sofi Filtration's website. The material for the video was filmed by Sofi Filtration employees during their customer cases and visits. The second video was filmed by a third party person for an external project. Both videos have been edited by the author of this paper using iMovie software. Due to the fact that digital rights for music are very expensive and hard to obtain, I have chosen an open license music service like SoundCloud. Artists on SoundCloud use a Creative Commons license which basically gives the artist the possibility to give up certain exclusive rights while retaining others. (SoundCloud 2014.)

As we saw previously in this paper, decision makers in the buying process have their own channels of getting informed before making a purchase decision. Therefore, videos can offer an additional way of reaching these decision makers and convince them of one's brand. The benefits of using video to enhance a company's marketing capabilities are too many to count in this short space. However, I have found a few noteworthy examples of video marketing that are summarized in the next paragraphs.

According to Megan O'Neill 2014, videos are heavily shared by users and it empowers the viewer to share it further. Additionally, in 2010 social video campaigns have generated 2.7 billion views. David Murdico 2013, states that video entertains, informs and motivates the consumers. The author also emphasizes that more than 60 percent of consumers will spend at least 2 minutes in watching a video about a product that they wish to purchase. Furthermore, video is now mobile and it increases the chances to put the product/service right in the hands of the consumer. Figure 22 gives us an idea how important mobile video consumption has become.

Mobile Network Data Volume by Content

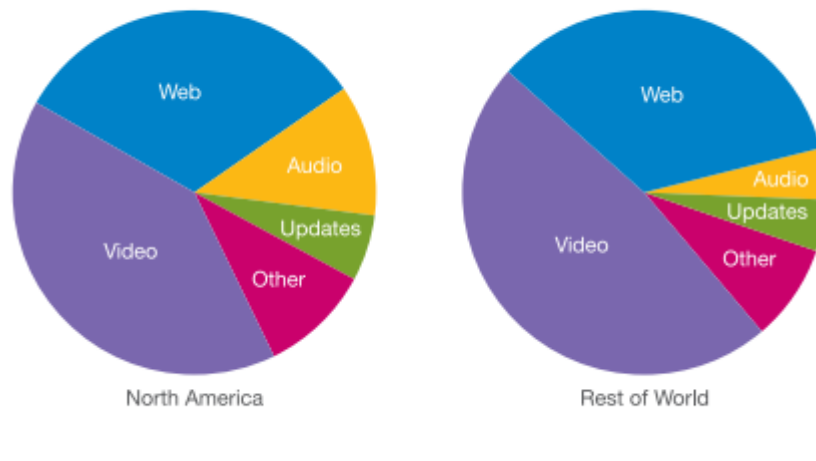


Figure 22. Mobile Network Data Volume by Content. Citrix 2013.

WireBuzz 2014, argues that video is the most powerful marketing tool that is available on the web. According to the site, video content is loved by search engines as they generate relevance indicators and this will result in higher ranking of the content/website in organic searches. Additionally, using videos on YouTube and own website will increase the visibility and searchable footprint of one's content. Currently, video can be considered as the best technology to convey an emotion. This makes video one of the most persuasive forms of content out there. The human brain needs emotional contribution to make decisions. Video appeals to the human's visual and auditory systems through different signals such as body language, facial expressions, pictures and audio. All these signals cause an emotional bond that will have an influence on the viewer's actions as a result of having watched a video. Last but not least, WireBuzz 2014 argues that video combined with email marketing has a much bigger click-through rate (200%-300% increase) than if emails would have just regular content.

2.9 Pay Per Click

Chances are that if somebody researches a products or service to make a buying decision, he or she will use a search engine and or the internet. As we saw in figure 20, 52% of the respondents used a search engine to make a buying decision and 69% of people used the internet to decide what and whether to buy or not. At this point, I

would like to mention that the information in this and the next chapters titled, Google Analytics and Google AdWords is based on Google's Partner program and it might need a Google account to verify the information. If the reader of this paper does not have access to this information due to account issues, I can provide supervised access with my login credentials. Some information has been collected from Google's AdWords YouTube channel which can be accessed freely from any browser connected to the internet.

The pay per click topic is a vast one and could be a thesis topic in itself. Therefore, in the next sections, I give a brief explanation of the key concepts and how it works. I believe that the information provided here is enough for a small company to start an online pay per click advertising campaign using Google AdWords.

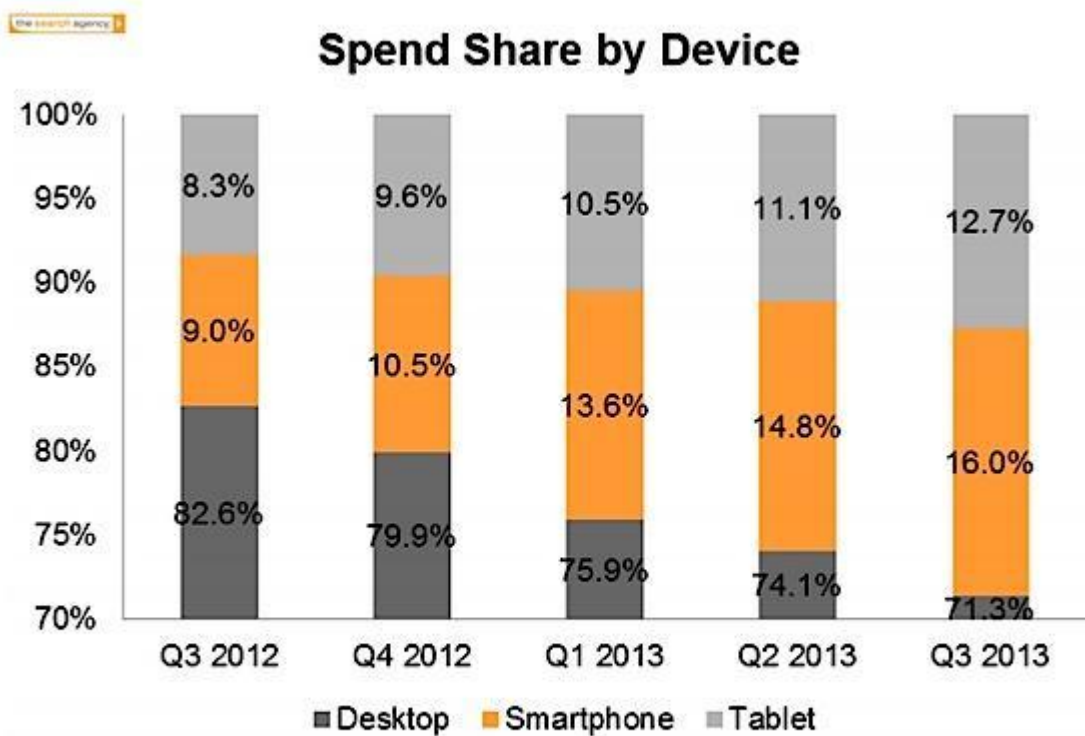
The concept of PPC or pay per click is an online advertising method that allows an individual or company to promote its products and services. There are several major providers to choose from and I will mention here only three of them: Google, Bing and Yahoo. Additionally, social media sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn offer advertising solutions but they are the late comers to the game and therefore there is not much historical data to draw conclusions. Furthermore, depending on the business type, a company's target group might be difficult to target on social media. The following data was collected from a survey conducted by The Search Agency and shows how much the cost per click has increased and where companies spend their money.



Source: State of Paid Search Report - Q3 2013, The Search Agency

Figure 23. Increase in cost per click. Ayaz Nanji 2013, MarketingProfs.com

It is interesting to see that in just one year the cost per click has increased with 5.9%.



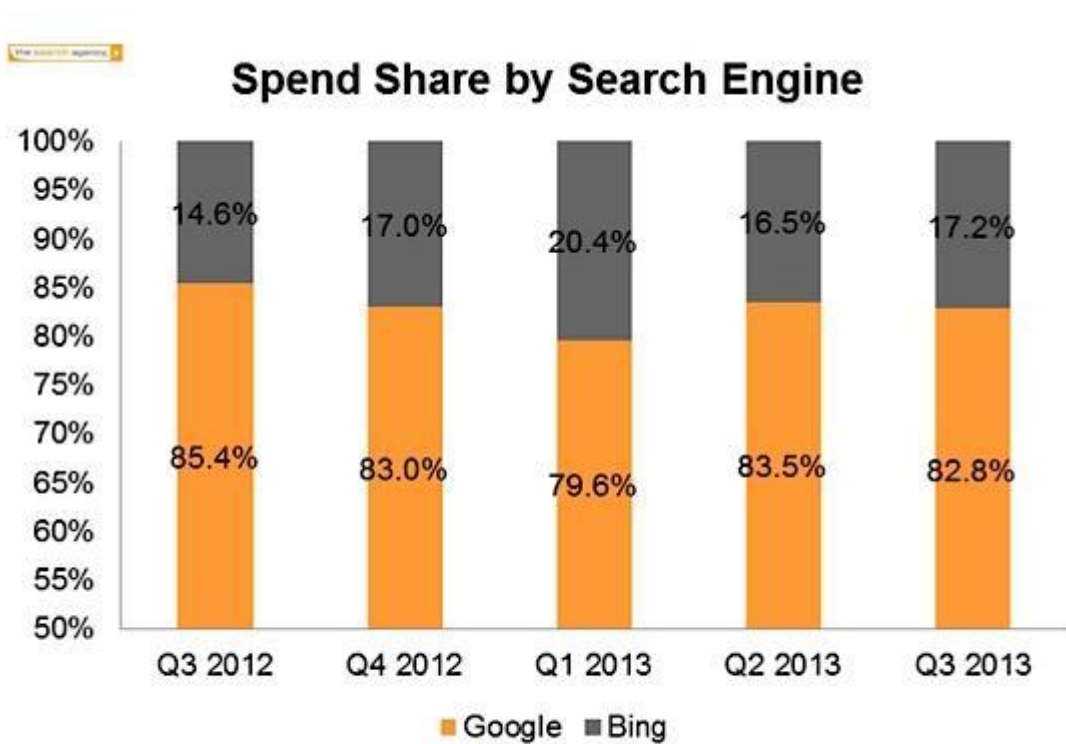
Source: State of Paid Search Report - Q3 2013, The Search Agency

Figure 24. Spend share by device. Ayaz Nanji 2013, MarketingProfs.com

The increase in advertising on mobile and tablets shows the direction where customers are spending most of their time. According to the survey, paid search spending for both tablets and smartphones made up 28.7% of the companies paid search budgets. This spending was up 65.9 year over year. For example:

- Budget spent on smartphones: up and 118.1% year over year.
- Budget spent on tablets: up and 87.6% year over year.

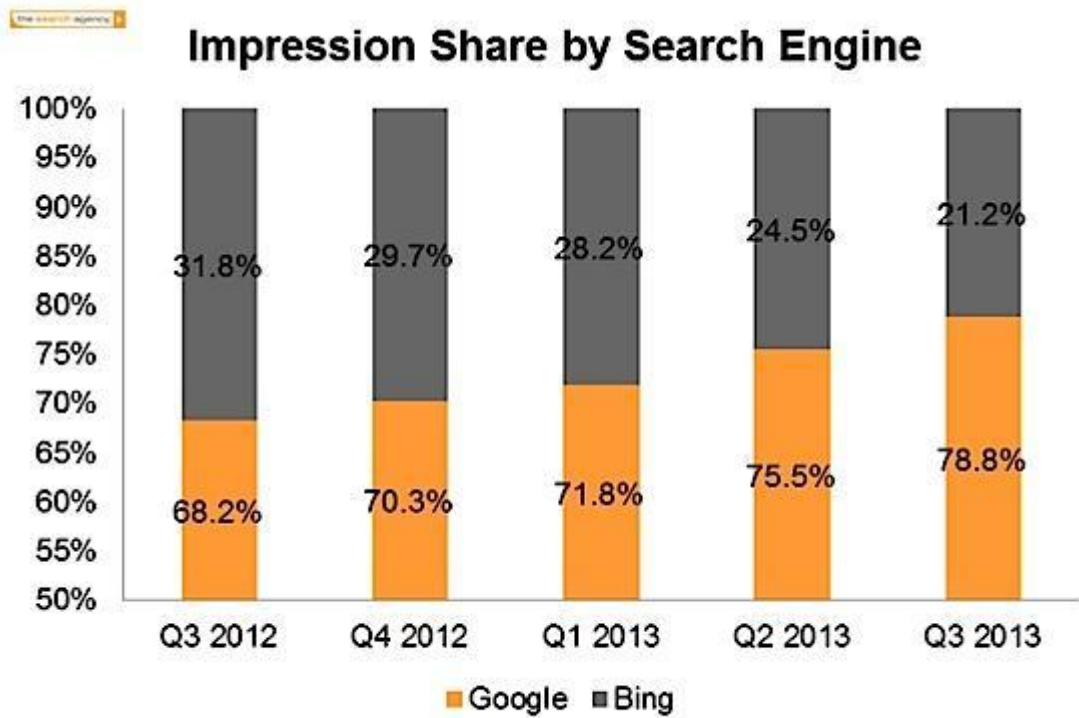
Figure 25 offers a good picture regarding the search engine spending. We can clearly see that Google is still leading, with companies spending most on AdWords.



Source: State of Paid Search Report - Q3 2013, The Search Agency

Figure 25. Spend share by search engine. Ayaz Nanji 2013, MarketingProfes.com

Google's impression share grew compared with Bing. In fact Google has gained impression share from Bing in each of the past five quarters.



Source: State of Paid Search Report - Q3 2013, The Search Agency

Figure 26. Impression share by search engine. Ayaz Nanji 2013, MarketingProfes.com

As technology advances and consumer behavior changes, the results of a new survey can change from quarter to quarter quite radically. Before I dive more deeply into Google AdWords, here is a brief review of the main solutions mentioned before and available on the market.

Google AdWords

- The Plus: Widest reach on the market, most advanced technology, excellent customer service, multi-channel possibilities, conversion tracking
- The Minus: Expensive, high competition for ad space

Bing AdCenter

- The Plus: More budgeting options, longer character limits for ads, cheap.
- The Minus: Narrow reach, no revenue tracking.

Facebook Ads

- The Plus: Cheap, builds an audience, advanced demographic reporting, deep targeting.
- The Minus: Basic technology, only seen on Facebook, poor customer service, no conversion tracking,

LinkedIn Ads

- The Plus: Ideal for B2B targeting collects leads direct from ads
- The Minus: Expensive; low click through rate, seen mainly in LinkedIn

Like with all things digital one has to try out several things and see what fits and yields the highest outcome. A good example of trying out online advertising comes from a Finnish company called Heia Heia. In an interview published online on ArcticStartup.com in 2013, Jussi Raisanen, HeiaHeia CEO, states the importance of trying different tools and choose what works best for you. The company has experimented with LinkedIn ads, but for some reason it did not yield the expected results.

"Frankly I'm a little disappointed in it," says Raisanen. "I don't see it as a problem; I think LinkedIn is developing so fast that LinkedIn is going to be an important tool for us in other ways. So my opinions might be outdated in a month. But so far advertising there hasn't worked so well, so we won't be focusing there too much." (Greg Anderson 2013) On the other hand, Google AdWords seem to work much better for them. According to Jusi, the company is seeing good results with Google but it can depend on the market.

2.10 Google AdWords

Google AdWords is a very powerful tool that can add considerably to a company's image and client portfolio. Furthermore, I have personally worked with Google AdWords and therefore I can speak more in detail about this tool.

Before explaining Google AdWords in more detail it is necessary to define the search engine. AdWords would not exist without the invention of a web search engine.

Search engines: "are programs that search documents for specified keywords and return a list of the documents where the keywords were found. A search engine is really a general class of programs; however, the term is often used to specifically describe systems like Google, Bing and Yahoo! Search that enable users to search for documents on the World Wide Web." (Webropedia.com 2014.)

Therefore, one can safely say that the main purpose or function of any web search engine is to help people find the information they're looking for as quick and accurate as possible. For example a person/user types a word or phrase into the web search engine and almost instantly relevant results are displayed. It is important to note that most search engines provide two types of search results: organic search results (also called "natural" or "free"), and search ads. In our case, Google organizes the search results and search ads separate. Usually the Google ads are accompanied by an additional phrase that states: "Ads related to XX", where XX was the initial user query. There are two ways of appearing on a Google search result. The first one is called organic search result. The second one is paid search result or AdWords.

Organic search is simply the search that generates results that are not paid advertisements. The organic search results are generated based on their popularity and usage.

AdWords, "Google's online advertising program, lets you reach new customers and grow your business." (Google.com 2014) With AdWords users can create simple and effective ads. These ads appear to people when they are searching online for information related to one's business. The fact that there is no minimum spending commitment and that you can pause or stop anytime, makes Google AdWords an interesting platform for any company or person that wishes to enhance its visibility on the web. AdWords campaigns can appear on Google Search and Google Display Networks.

Google Search is basically Google's search engine results. Here, when someone searches for a keyword or phrase Google AdWords appears above and to the right of the

organic search results. There can be a maximum of eleven ads that appear on a search. There is no particular reason given by Google for the limited number of ads that appear on a typical search. However I assume that the limited number of ads per page has to do with the clarity and cleanliness of the search results.

Google Display Network is a collection of partner websites and specific Google websites. Among the Google Network sites where AdWords ads can appear are Gmail, YouTube, Google Finance and Blogger. On top of these sites the network also includes a large base of partner websites as well as mobile sites and apps. Figure 27 and 28 illustrate Google's reach when it comes to ads displayed over its display network.



Figure 27. Google Display Network. Thinkwithgoogle.com 2014.

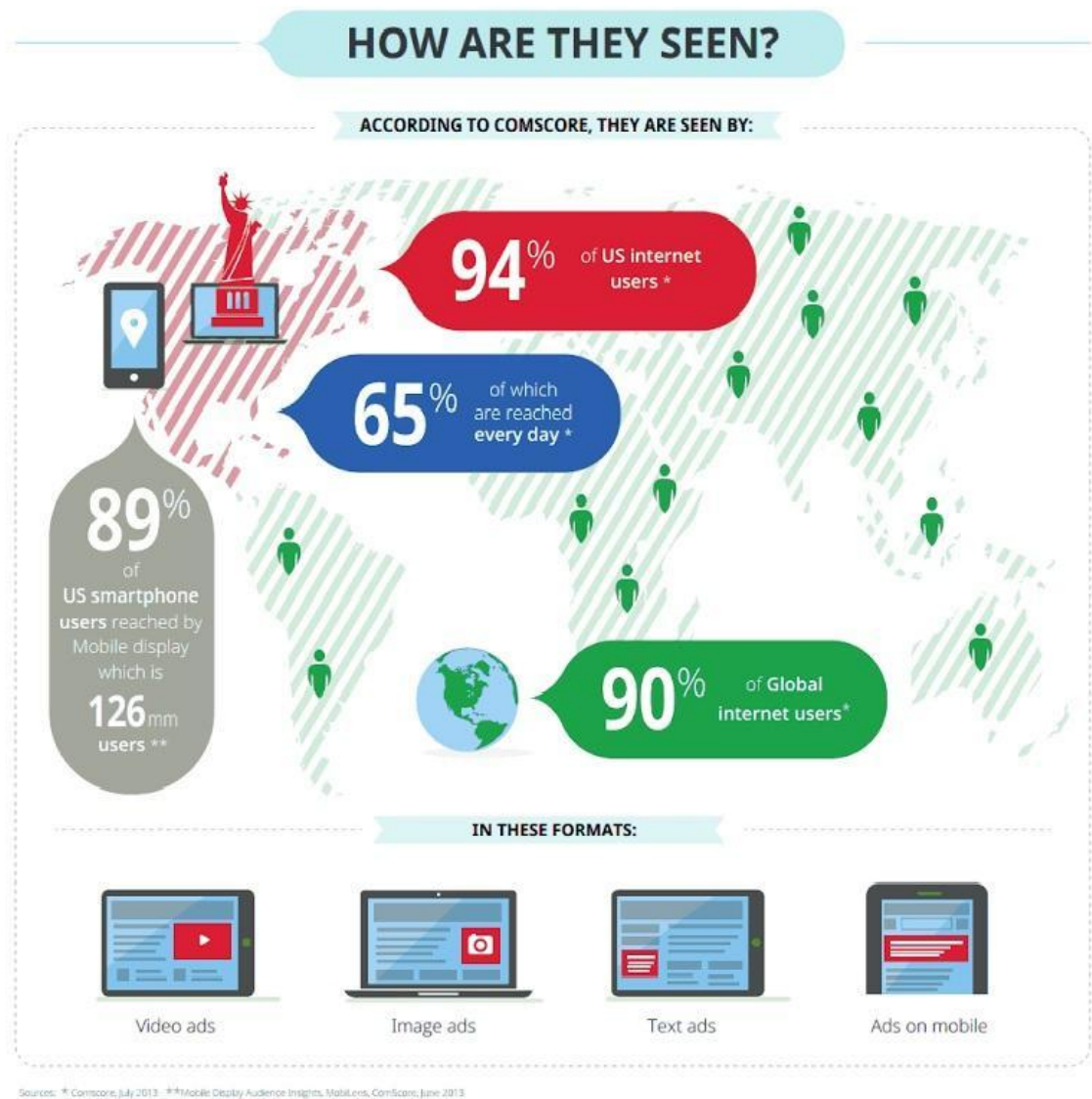


Figure 28. Google Display Network. Thinkwithgoogle.com 2014.

We saw in figure 19 that most (69% of respondents) people searched the internet before deciding to make a purchase. This is especially relevant when thinking of Google display network due to the fact that those people are constantly exposed to Google ads while searching for a product or service. Hence, the chance that one's product or service is viewed through Google AdWords is fairly high.

The following terminology is specific to pay per click advertising and it is important that these terms are understood before even opening an account with any online platform.

Keywords are the search terms that a user utilizes to search for a product, service or simply for information. Keywords can be simple one-word term or whole phrases. The keywords are an important aspect in the whole digital strategy of a company. They are included in the website content, ads, blogs and so forth. Each keyword should be relevant to the content it points to. In Google AdWords, one can easily see how each keyword performs and then tweak or remove it all together. Keyword planning can be done in several ways but I will mention here only two methods. The AdWords account has a tool called “Keyword planner”. This tool helps one to research and plan the keywords for the future campaign. It is versatile and easy to use. It helped me to research and plan keywords for the campaigns that I have run for my employer. The second tool is called “Google Trends” and it basically shows how many search queries a keyword has and the demographics of that keyword. Furthermore, with Google Trends one can compare the same keyword over time.

Cost-per-thousand impressions (CPM) represent the rate to be charged or paid for every 1,000 times an advertisement is displayed. It is widely used to set pricing for online ads. This bidding technique is most effective when the goal is to create more brand awareness. It can be set manually in the Google AdWords platform.

Clickthrough rate (CTR) represents the number of clicks that an ad gets divided by the number of times the ad is shown (called impressions). The higher the CTR the better. A higher CTR means that the users find the ads relevant and helpful. It is important to note that each ad and keyword has its own CTR. The CTR is a good key performance indicator as it shows which keyword or ad performs good and which not.

Cost-per-Click (CPC) is the maximum amount an advertiser is willing to pay each time a user clicks on the advertiser's ad. This bidding option is most suitable for companies who set their goal to increase sales or website traffic. One can set the CPC manually or let Google manage it automatically. The best way for one's company will reveal itself through trial and error.

Quality score has a huge impact and influence on the cost and effectiveness of the paid advertising campaign. The quality score is a sum of several aspects of digital mar-

keting and it is specific to Google AdWords. Figure 29 illustrates how quality score is measured.



Figure 29. Quality score composition. Wordstream.com 2014

The exact way on how the quality score is calculated and the weight it pulls on every part of the pay per click campaign is not fully known as this is kept secret by Google. However, the CTR plays an important role and can be considered one of the most important factors that influence the quality score. A higher quality score will lead in lower cost per click. There are several things one can do to improve the quality score. For example, the landing page (URL) where the ad points should be relevant to the ad that pointed to it. The ad and the keywords can be constantly reviewed and adjusted. Figure 30 illustrates accurately how a higher quality score results in a lower CPC and hence a higher chance to achieve the goal set for that campaign.

	Max Bid	Quality Score	Ad Rank	Actual CPC
Advertiser I	\$2.00	10	20	$16/10 + 0.01 =$ \$1.61
Advertiser II	\$4.00	4	16	$12/4 + 0.01 =$ \$3.01
Advertiser III	\$6.00	2	12	$8/2 + 0.01 =$ \$4.01
Advertiser IV	\$8.00	1	8	Highest CPC

Notice how Advertiser I can pay less for a higher position due to his high quality score.

Figure 30. Quality score performance. Wordstream.com 2014

Once registered, AdWords can be set up in a matter of minutes and the user can start running the first campaign. The account structure can look as follows but is not limited to this example:

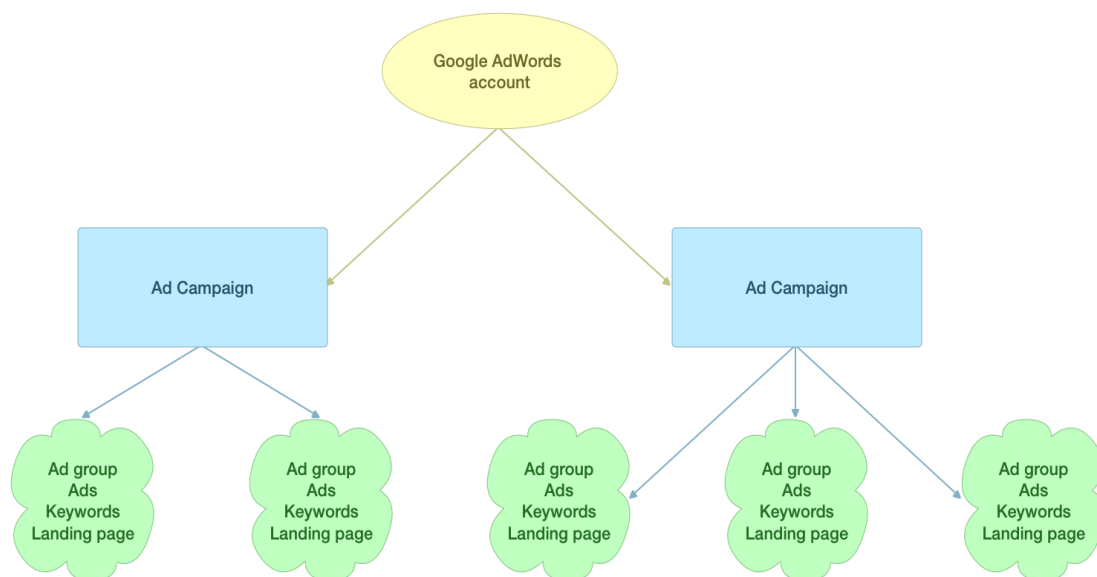


Figure 31. Google AdWords account structure

The Google AdWords account allows up to 25 campaigns. One campaign can contain up to 100 ad groups. The ad groups can include hundreds of keywords and everything can be modified at any given point in time. Preferably, before setting up a campaign or even an account the company should think about the goals of that particular campaign and what it wants to achieve with targeted online ads. Defining the goal from the beginning helps when measuring the results of the campaign. Therefore each campaign can have one specific goal that the company wants to achieve. In our case, we can, for example, define one campaign as getting more leads. Another campaign goal can be: getting more sign ups to the company's newsletter or to increase the number of people who download the company's white papers. Alternatively, there can be different ad groups based on location. For example, the company can create an ad group for every country it wants to target. Country specific targeting with AdWords gives a more focused approach to pay per click advertising. On top of this a company can save money with targeted campaigns as it can customize the campaign to that particular region or area. For example, let's take the DACH (Germany, Austria, and Switzerland) countries as this area has some similar features such as: language, time zone and cultural aspects too. One ad campaign can be called DACH and for every country there can be a sepa-

rate ad group. Additionally the ads can be designed in the local language to better appeal to the audience. Furthermore, landing pages in local languages can be created and thus the ad campaigns can point directly to those pages. Once created, the ads can be set to run in specific time intervals. The time, days and weeks when the ad appears can be easily set up. This will reduce the costs of the online advertising. There is no point in running an ad campaign during the weekends and night time as well as during national holidays.

Once the setup is complete, Google AdWords campaigns can be monitored, modified and paused directly from the AdWords control panel. Google will notify the account owner on a regular basis with ad performance improvement tips as well as with relevant keywords. Google AdWords account can be linked with another Google tool: Google Analytics.

2.11 Google Analytics

Google Analytics is a digital analytics tool developed by Google. Regardless of the business size and industry or geographical location, Google Analytics enables executives, marketing professionals, content developers as well as individuals to monitor and analyze the behavior of the users who come to their website. Below I have sampled a few example of what can be done with Google Analytics:

- establish which marketing campaigns are the most effective
- accurate website traffic patterns/trends
- establish customer segments that are most valuable to you
- demographics such as location, age, type of device
- the behavior of the user on the website
- find out what are the keywords that resonate with visitors
- how many new visitors compared to old visitors
- what are the keywords that lead to conversions
- which online ad or campaign is the most effective
- where do people enter and leave the website
- on which pages do the visitors spend the most time

- what are the search terms that people use to find the website

The best way to find out how to utilize Analytics is to open an account and use it. Once the account is set up, the Google Analytics tracking code can be implemented on the website, mobile app or simply on the blog one wants to track. The tracking code is generated automatically once the Google Analytics account is created. It can be found in the Admin tab. For a new user, the implementation of the tracking code on the website is enough for the data to start to coming in so the experimentation can begin.

Figure 32 gives an idea about some of the metrics that can be found in Google Analytics. It is important to note that there are a large number of combinations and options that one can choose from.

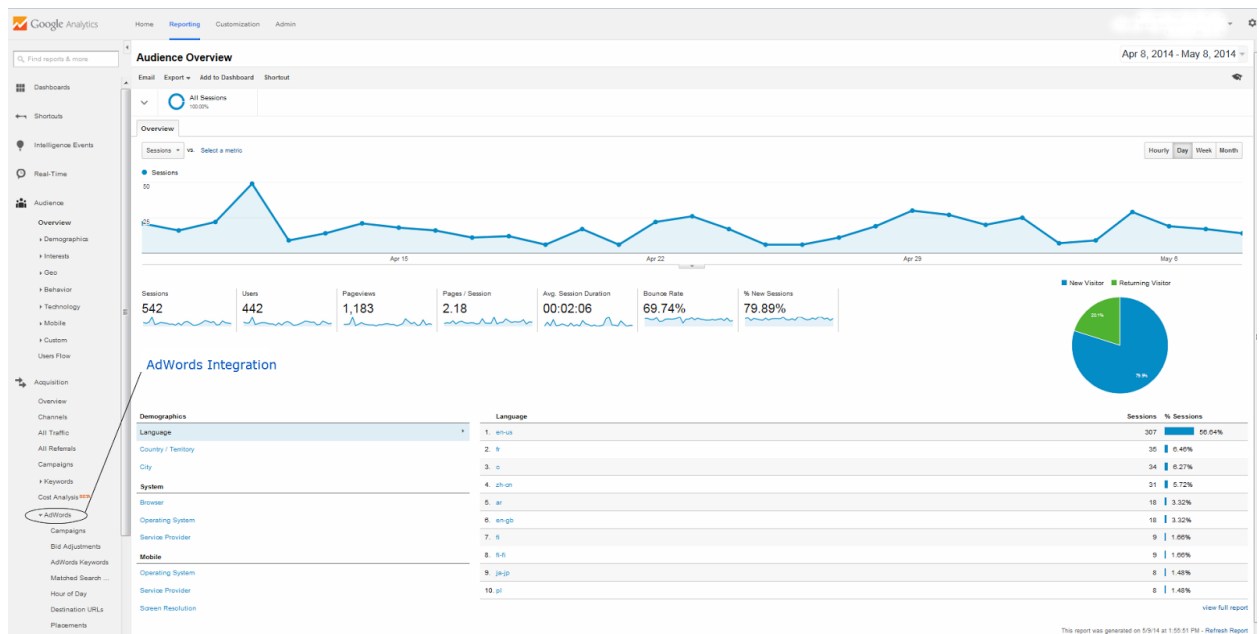


Figure 32. Google Analytics dashboard view. Google.com 2014.

In this particular account we have the Google AdWords account integrated with Analytics and this simplifies the monitoring of the advertising campaigns.

2.12 Search engine optimization (SEO)

What is SEO?

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is a new area of digital marketing that helps companies get a better ranking in the organic search of search engines. The SEO tweaks and improvements can help a website appear higher in searches on sites like Google. Paid or sponsored results such as Google AdWords are not affected by search engine optimizations. As we saw from the Google AdWords chapter, paid search results have their own set of rules. SEO is about making small, incremental changes to parts of the website of a company or private individual. These small changes can be seen as insignificant when looked at individually, but combined can have a huge impact on the website performance in search engines.

The site visitors are the primary consumers of content and hence the site and information should be relevant to them. By making the site content relevant to the visitors, search engines will notice that the keywords that brought the users to the website are matching the content of the page and hence the site will be ranked higher. Figure 33 shows us the difference between organic and paid search.

The image shows a Google search interface for the query "industrial water filtration". The search results are divided into two main sections: "Paid Search" and "Organic Search".

Paid Search Results:

- Industrial Water Filters - vafusa.com** (Ad): Self-Cleaning Industrial Screen Filters. Large Flow Range!
- Pure Aqua Reverse Osmosis - pureaqua.com** (Ad): Highest Grade Commercial RO Systems Get Better Performance & Lower Cost Water Treatment Products - Commercial ReverseOsmosis - Get a Quote
- Build A Better Water Filter - LydallFiltration.com** (Ad): Full Range of Microporous Filtration Medias. Request Samples!
- Industrial water filter** (Ad): Vortisand 0.45 micron industrial water sand filter
- Industrial Water Filter** (Ad): Industrial Membrane, Stainless, Pleated & Wound Cartridges
- Industrial water filtration** (Ad): Filters Systems and Filter Elements For Process Water and Wastewater
- Infiltec GmbH** (Ad): Filter für Flüssigkeiten & Gase Filtergehäuse & Filtereinsätze
- Industrial Water Filtration** (Ad): Largest online directory for equipment suppliers. Contact us
- Process water filtration** (Ad): Cooling tower, UF prefiltration, RO Solids removal from water

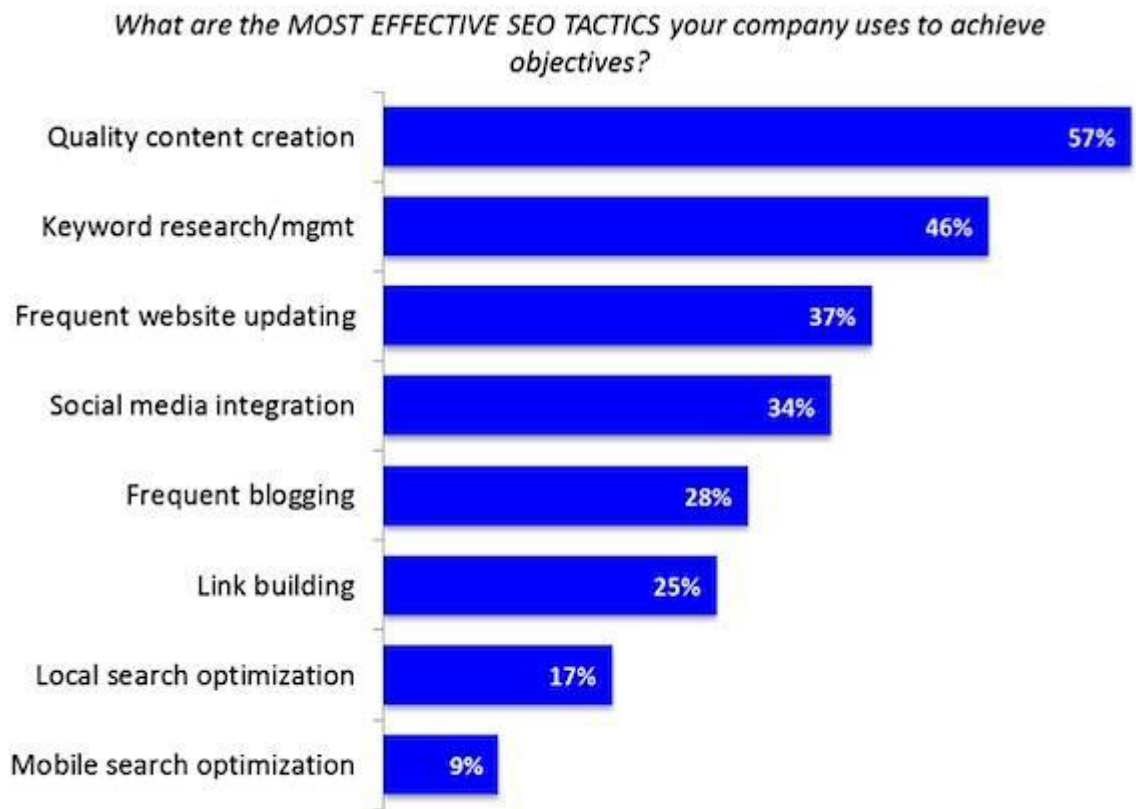
Organic Search Results:

- Images for industrial water filtration**: A collection of images showing various industrial water filtration equipment, including large blue tanks and pipes.
- Industrial water treatment - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia**: Industrial Water Treatment can be classified into the following categories: ... Although mechanical filtration, such as reverse osmosis, is widely employed to filter ...
- Water purification - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia**: This article is about large scale, municipal water purification ... meeting the requirements of medical, pharmacological, chemical and industrial applications.

The "Paid Search" label is in purple text with a line pointing to the top right of the search results area. The "Organic Search" label is in green text with a line pointing to the bottom right of the search results area.

Figure 33. Paid vs. organic search. Google Search 2013.

There are more and more companies out there that promise that they can rank you higher on the search engines. However, a small company can take several actions that require very little or no investment at all. In fact, most of the SEO tactics can be done in house at the expense of only one commodity: time. According to Ayaz Nanji and his article “The Most Effective SEO Tactics” there are a few SEO tools and tactics that can boost the search engine ranking of a company. The article is based on a SEO Marketing Benchmark Survey done by Ascend2 and Research Partners in April 2014, where 442 marketing and sales professionals responded to the survey.

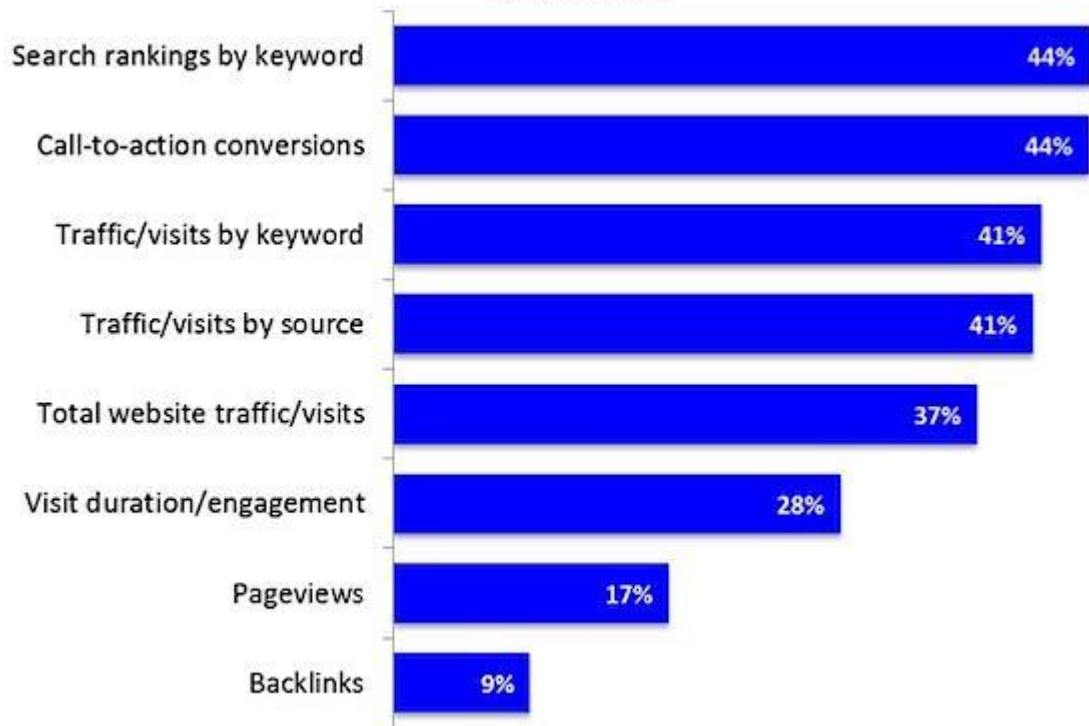


Ascend2 SEO Marketing Benchmark Survey N=442
Ascend2 and Research Partners, April 2014

Figure 34. Most effective SEO tactics. Ayaz Nanji 2014.

Content creation ranks the highest among the tactics used by companies to promote their products and rank higher on search engines. As we saw in the chapter on Google Analytics, digital analytics are powerful indicators for any business.

What are the MOST USEFUL METRICS used for tracking and analyzing SEO performance?



Ascend2 SEO Marketing Benchmark Survey N=442
Ascend2 and Research Partners, April 2014

Figure 35. Most useful metrics for SEO performance. Ayaz Nanji 2014.

The metrics described in figure 35 can be found and measured in Google Analytics. The monitoring of those metrics combined with consistent action can result in a higher ranking in organic search.

According to a Search Engine Optimization Starter Guide created by Google 2010, there are a few things that can be done for SEO. I found the guide complementary to the survey done by Ascend2.

- Accurate and unique page titles. The page title should describe as accurate as possible the page content. Page titles that are vague or set by default should be avoided.
- Unique title tags for every page on the website.
- Descriptive and brief titles.
- An accurate summary of the page. Every page has a description. The description should be concise and yet informative. Additionally, each page should have its own

unique description. Just keywords or whole product sheet information should be avoided.

- URL's (uniform resource locator or simply a web address) should contain words that are relevant to the site's content.
- A simple and flowing directory structure will make the content easier to find.
- As much as possible, text should be used for navigation as this will make it easier for search engines to better understand the site structure. Drop-down menus, animations and images can be difficult to be indexed by search engines with the current technology.
- The site content should be informative, easy to read and organized. Grammatical errors should be corrected immediately. Additionally it is advisable to avoid text embedded into images as this can be difficult to read by search engines.
- The content is for the users and not for the search engines. The user is at the center of the content and website design.
- Optimization of the use of images through adding descriptive text to each image.
- Social media sites are great tools to promote the content of the website. (Google 2010)

2.13 Literature summary

The literature framework for this case study is best summarized by the following figure:



Figure 36. Conceptual framework

As we saw from the literature review, there are quite a few fields and tools that can contribute to an effective and successful digital marketing strategy. These tools have been chosen especially for the case company as I believe they are the most relevant at this point in time. Naturally, with the evolution of things, Sofi Filtration can choose to review these tools and make different choices that would better serve their needs.

A **brand** is a promise and an expectation at the same time. The promise comes from the brand owner that he/she will deliver the best possible service or product. The expectation comes from the consumer/customer as they expect their need to be met. This promise extends beyond the name and the product. Quality, safety, performance, price and service are a promise too. Brands have to find a balance between fighting unfair competition and keeping the initial promise alive. Furthermore, the brand is a sign of ownership and adds value through its unique value proposition which normally should be different from competition. The success of a brand depends on the brand's capability to offer unique benefits as well as to fulfill the customer needs as best as they can. The brand should be consistent it reflect itself in all marketing tools and activities as well as in all products and services.

Where consumer marketing looks at satisfying the needs of the people who purchase brands to satisfy a personal need, organizational marketing looks into engaging other companies to sell or buy products and services. **B2B marketing** has several characteristics that point to the importance of branding in business to business relationships.

B2B marketing can be characterized by the following statements:

- More people are involved in the buying process.
- The time for making a purchase decision is far greater than in consumer business.
- The buyer in B2B tends to be far more rational compared to the buyer in the B2C.
- Buyers in B2B are seeking long term relationships with their suppliers.

In most cases, companies have a **buying center** that deals with the buying process. A typical buying center structure is comprised of: users, influencers, deciders, buyers and gatekeepers. Understanding who these people are and what are the roles they play within the buying center, can help brand marketers to better position their brand with-

in that organization. All of the people involved in the buying process of industrial goods have their own channels of getting information and therefore a company needs to address that communication as best as it can.

The **digital** era has changed forever the way people interact with each other. Engaging these customers in the places and on the platforms they spend their time on is crucial for any business who wishes to be successful. Therefore, digital marketing starts with a solid strategy that has well defined goals.

Most if not all of the tools described in this study make use of **content**. The content is that piece of information that is conveyed with a specific marketing tool to a selected audience. Relevant and engaging content keeps and increases the audience. Being consistent in your actions sends a positive signal to your audience that you are committed in keeping the promise that comes attached to your brand.

"**Personas** are archetypes that describe the various goals and observed behavior patterns among your potential users and customers." (Kim Goodwin 2009, 229.)

Creating a buyer persona can help the case company to define and segment its target audience. Additionally, a buyer's persona can significantly help in creating and delivering content for the target audience.

The **website** is the online business card of the company and hence it is important that it is up to date and consistent. The company website can be used as a platform or center piece for all other digital activities. The company blog as well as links to social networks should be added to the website. It is important to remember the audience when developing content for the website. The website topic is something that needs to be addressed by the case company in further studies as the topic was not addressed in this study.

Search engine optimization (SEO) is tightly related to the company website as well as to the content the company creates and distributes. SEO is about making small, incremental changes to parts of the company website. These small changes can be seen

as insignificant when looked at individually, but combined can have a huge impact on the website performance in search engines.

The **email** is still one of the most powerful digital tools out there. Communication with your audience can be achieved through a regular e-newsletter sent either once a month or on a quarterly basis. The newsletter can be customized and divided for each target group. Each group can be targeted with different content at different time. In fact it is recommended that with certain target groups the communication is kept on a regular basis. Using newsletter and emailing software tools such as MailChimp can give the case company the necessary analytics to monitor and evaluate the engagement and effectiveness of its email marketing strategy.

The **company blog** is one of the best ways to share knowledge and drive traffic to the website. The blog can be used and added directly on the company website. Blog posts can be promoted and shared on social media as well as on industry relevant website as a guest post. The average length of a blog post should be between 500 and 700 words. The more succinct a blog post the higher are the chances that visitors will spend their time to read it and even share or promote it.

Social Media is a platform where everybody can talk to everybody and therefore it is important, especially for businesses to join the conversation. There are several social media platforms that are relevant for the case company. **Twitter** is an incredible tool for listening and for doing market research. You can listen to your readers, find out what other companies/people are doing and saying as well as build a relationship with current and future readers. **LinkedIn** is the most professional social network out there. By joining LinkedIn you can benefit from a variety of valuable information as well as from generating quality leads. It is recommended that, with company growth and increased social presence (blog, Twitter, etc), Sofi Filtration considers to perform a feasibility study for joining **Facebook**.

The **video** tool has become increasingly one of the most used channels in marketing. Today, when content is everywhere and time to consume it is practically inexistent, videos seem to solve several problems by conveying more information in less time.

This makes videos a very attractive tool for marketers and individuals. Specialized websites for video hosting and sharing such as YouTube, Vimeo and Dailymotion have changed the video marketing landscape forever.

Pay per click (PPC) is an online advertising method that allows an individual or company to promote its products and services. There are several major providers to choose from and I will mention here only three of them: Google, Bing and Yahoo. Additionally, social media sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn offer advertising solutions too but due to the scope of this study they were not discussed. **AdWords**, is Google's online advertising program. With AdWords users can create simple and effective ads. These ads appear to people when they are searching online for information related to one's business.

Google Analytics is a digital analytics tool developed by Google. Regardless of the business size and industry or geographical location, Google Analytics enables marketing professionals, content developers as well as individuals to monitor and analyze the behavior of the users who come to their website. Integrating AdWords with Analytics offers a unified solution for monitoring most of the digital activities.

Experimenting with the analyzed tools and concepts can, in time, prove their relevance and effectiveness for the case company. As the company grows and other factors change, new tools and concepts can be studied and explored.

3 Research methodology and methods

This chapter presents the research methodology and method of this thesis as it gives an introduction to case study research. Furthermore, it will dive into the case company Sofi Filtration and it will give an overview of key concepts and terms that are used in case study research. The main aim of this chapter is to give the reader an overview of the research methodology and method used to construct this study.

In social sciences, the concept of research paradigm is often used as a method of examining social phenomena. From these observations of social phenomena, the researcher gains some insights in these phenomena and tries to make some clarifications out of them. The research paradigms can be used in business and management as well to produce new and innovative ideas to real life issues. According to Saunders et.al 2008, there are four major research paradigms that can be used in research.

The **radical humanist paradigm** takes a critical perspective on organizational life. Hence, functioning within this paradigm the researcher would be concerned with changing the present circumstances and find ways where humans can move beyond the existing social patterns into something grander and fuller. The **radical structuralist paradigm** approaches the research with a view to accomplishing fundamental transformation based upon an examination of organizational phenomena. Furthermore, this paradigm is involved with structural configurations within work organizations such as hierarchies and reporting relationships and the degree to which these may yield anomalies. The **interpretive paradigm** looks at the world around and tries to make sense of it based on the observed phenomena. The research carried out in this paradigm would be concerned with understanding the vital meanings involved in the organizational life as well as discovering any irrationalities that might exist. The **functionalist paradigm** is often problem-oriented and aims to provide hands-on solutions to real-world problems. The researcher operating within this paradigm is concerned with a rational explanation of why a specific organizational phenomenon is happening as well as developing a set of recommendations for that particular phenomenon. Business and management research operates typically within this research paradigm. This particular study falls under the functionalist paradigm as it tries to find answers to a real need that the case

company has at the moment. To take this further, I could say that under this research paradigm my role as a researcher is to look into the current communication strategy and process of the case company and provide tools and strategies to improve, change or replace existing phenomena. (Saunders et.all, 2008, 118-121.)

The **research philosophy** adopted by the researcher plays an important role in the research process and has a significant influence on the research outcome. Hence the research philosophy relates to the development of information and the nature of that particular information. The research philosophy adopted by the researcher contains important suppositions about the way in which the researcher views the world. These assumptions will reinforce the researcher's research strategy and it will have an influence on choosing the research tools. (Saunders et.all, 2008, 107-109.)

There are two main ways of thinking about research philosophy: **epistemology** and **ontology**. Each of these way of thinking, can and will influence the way in which the researcher considers the research process. While ontology looks at the nature of reality epistemology looks at what is suitable knowledge in a specific field of study. Within ontology there can be distinguished two attitudes: objectivism and subjectivism. While objectivism holds that social entities are in reality external to social players, subjectivism hold that social phenomena are formed from the perceptions and following activities of social performers. Table 2 details the four main typed of research philosophies and looks at them from the ontology and epistemology perspective. Furthermore, table 2 summarizes accurately the four main research philosophies that are commonly used in management research. (Saunders et.all, 2008, 110-119.)

Table 2. The four research philosophies compared. (Saunders et. all. 2008, 119.)

	Positivism	Realism	Interpretivism	Pragmatism
Ontology: the way the researcher views the reality	Typically external, objective and independent of social players	Is objective. Exists independently of human thoughts and beliefs or knowledge of their existence but is interpreted through social conditioning	Socially created, subjective, may change, manifold	External, multiple. This view is selected to best facilitate the answering of the research question
Epsitemology researcher's view about what constitutes satisfactory information	Only observable phenomena can provide credible data, facts. Focus on causality and law like generalizations reducing phenomena to simplest elements	Observable phenomena provides credible data&facts. Deficient data means inaccuracies in sensations. Instead, phenomena create feelings which are open to confusion. The focus is on explaining within a context or contexts	Subjective meanings and social phenomena. Focus upon the details of situation, a reality behind these details, subjective meanings motivating actions	Either or both observable phenomena & subjective meanings can offer acceptable knowledge dependent upon the research question. The focus is put on practical applied research.

According to Saunders et. all 2008, there are two main **research approaches**: deduction and induction. While using **deduction** as a research approach, the researcher typically develops one or several hypotheses and the research strategy to test that hypothesis. This approach is probably one of the most dominant research approaches in natural sciences. On the other hand, using **induction** as a research approach, the data are collected and a theory is developed as a result of the data examination.

The research philosophies and approaches are best summarized in figure 37

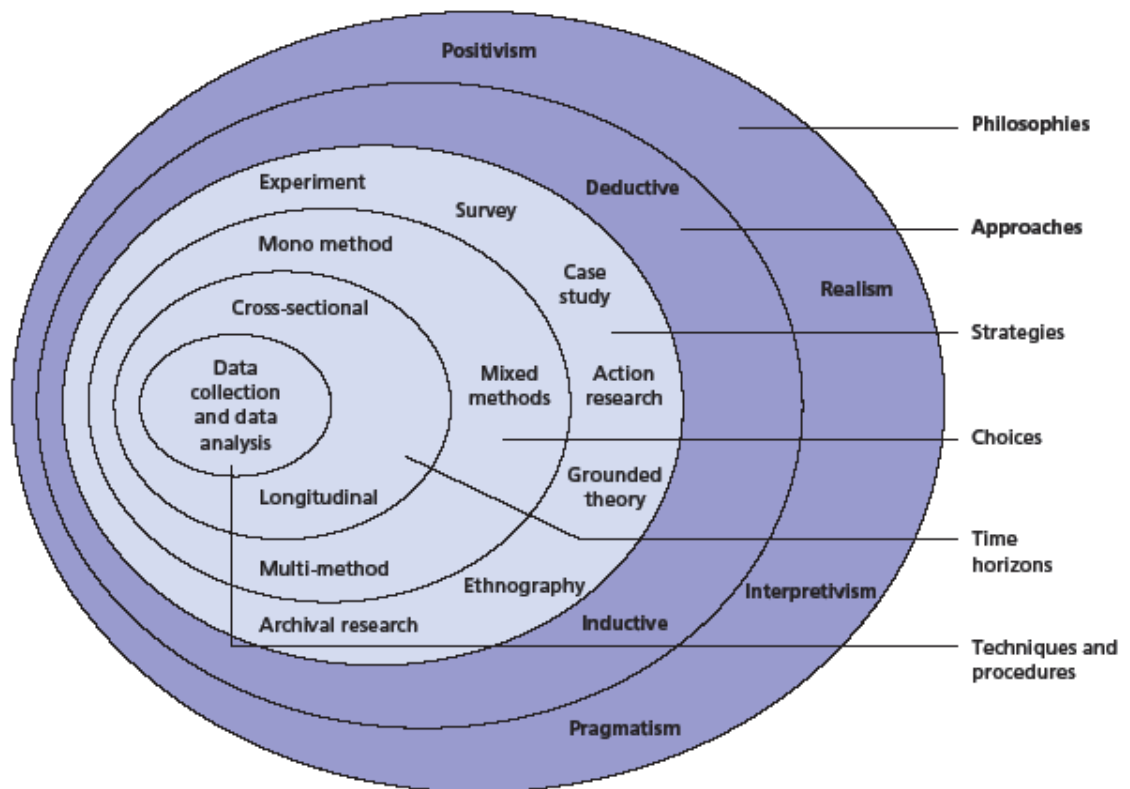


Figure 37. The research onion. (Saunders et. all 2008, 108.)

This study follows the interpretivism research philosophy and a combined deductive and inductive research approach. Furthermore, the research strategy chosen for this study is case study research.

3.1 What is case study research?

There are different types of research methods that one can use for an empirical study. Based on the type of research question posed, the degree of focus on contemporary as opposed to historical events and the level of control that a researcher has over the ac-

tual behavioral events we can distinguish five research methods. These methods are outlined in table 3 below.

Table 3. Types of research methods and their conditions. Yin (2009, 8.)

Research method	Form of research question	Requires control over behavioral events	Focus on contemporary events
Experiment	How? Why?	Yes	Yes
Survey	who, what, where, how many, how much?	No	Yes
Archival analysis	who, what, where, how many, how much?	No	Yes/No
History	How? Why?	No	No
Case study	How? Why?	No	Yes

In differentiating between the different research methods presented in table 3, the researcher needs to classify first the type of research question that needs to be asked. For the purpose of this study the question to be asked is “How can digital marketing help a small start-up company to generate more sales leads and increase their brand awareness among their target audience?”. Yin (2009, 10.)

According to Gerring (2007, 10) the case study has been sometimes associated with qualitative methods of analysis as it might make use of multiple techniques for the gathering and processing of data. The data can be both quantitative and qualitative and because of this aspect case-study research can be considered to be one of the most flexible research methods. In his book “Case Study Research Principles and Practices” Gerring (2007, 19) frames the term “case” as follows:

“Case connotes a spatially delimited phenomenon (a unit) observed at a single point in time or over some period of time. It comprises the type of phenomenon that an inference attempts to explain. Thus, in a study that attempts to elucidate certain features of nation-states, cases are comprised of nation-states (across some temporal frame); in a study that attempts to explain the behavior of individuals, cases are comprised of individuals, and so forth. Each case may provide a single observation or multiple (within-case) observations.”

Additionally the author argues that the case study approach to research is most usefully defined as an intensive study of a single unit or a small number of units (the cases), for the purpose of understanding a larger class of similar units (a population of cases).

A case study could be understood as a thorough study of a single case where the aim of that particular study is to put some light on a larger number of cases. Sometimes this type of research can incorporate several case studies. However, at a certain point, when the number of the cases have reached a certain limit it will no longer be possible to investigate those cases in details. Additionally, when the accent of a study changes from the individual case to a sample of cases, one can safely say that a study is a cross-case study. The less cases are involved in the study the more focus can be put on individual cases and hence the work yields more accurate results. (Gerring 2007, 20-37.)

3.2 Types of case studies

Depending on the research types there can be explanatory case studies, descriptive case studies or exploratory case studies. The explanatory case study generally answers the question of “how” and “why” and the focus is on a phenomenon in a real life context. In this type of case the researcher has little to no control over the actual events. Descriptive case studies can be used to trace the sequence of interpersonal events over time. Additionally these types of cases can describe a culture or subculture or seek to discover a key development. Exploratory case studies look at the questions of ‘what’ or ‘who’. This type of case is often used before a more comprehensive study is done and it attempts to understand what happens within a case by looking beyond the descriptive characteristics into studying surround context. There are certain concerns when choosing cases study as a research method. For instance, the chances for scientific generalization of case studies are very slim. Additionally, the time allocated for this type of study can take very long and produce a lot of documentation. (Yin, 2009, 8-15.)

In this study I have chosen the exploratory case study model. In this case, the exploratory case study is the most accurate method of investigation as it investigates the tools and ways a small start-up company can utilize to engage its audience in the digital era. Additionally, this research was carried out by searching for literature, looking into relevant surveys and interviews as well as working with university focus groups.

3.3 Validity and reliability

The research method of this paper is case study research and focuses on a small Finnish start-up company. This study will take a deeper look at a small technology company involved in industrial water filtration. As much as some or most of the theories and findings could be applied to different companies they might not apply to different industries and type of business. A good example to illustrate the validity of this research would be to apply the findings and the digital marketing concept developed for B2B company to a B2C company.

The research design is assumed to represent a logical set of affirmations and therefore one can evaluate the quality of any given design according to certain coherent tests.

The question of **validity** is usually looked at according to the internal and external aspects that are under the study. There are several types of questions or tests that a researcher needs to address when working with a cases study as a research method.

These are the questions of: construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability. **Construct validity** means establishing accurate operational measures for the ideas being studied. **Internal validity** means, looking to establish a causal relationship, where certain circumstances are considered to lead to other conditions. **External validity** means finding a field to which the findings of a study can be generalized. In this case study the validity of the research is ensured by the similar results presented in the different surveys and interviews. Additionally, the different literature review has presented similar views on the same topics. On top of that, the results obtained from the experimentation phase reinforced the theory and surveys presented in this study. One additional argument in favor of the validity of this study is the results from the class experiment conducted in Haaga Helia. These results have been consistent with the literature review and the experimentation phase. Furthermore, the results of this study

can be applied to almost any start-up company that does not have a digital strategy even if the goals of that company are not the same as in our case.

Reliability looks at proving that the procedure of a particular study can be repeated with the same results. In dealing with these questions, a researcher can use several options to make sure that case study leads to the best possible outcome. In construct validity the researcher can use multiple sources of evidence and establish a chain of evidence. These tactics should be best applied during the data collection phase of the research. Additional tactics may be applied during the composition phase of the research. The tactics for internal validity look at pattern matching, explanation building and the addressing of rival explanations. These tactics are to be used during the data analysis phase of the research. External validity looks at theory in single case studies and at replication logic in multiple case studies. This is done to test if the findings of the study are generalizable beyond the case study in question. These tactics are applied during the research design phase of the research. The last question that a researcher has to ask is regarding the reliability of the case study. Here the main goal is to make sure that if another researcher would follow the same procedures and conducted the same case study all over again, he or she would come to the same conclusions as in the initial case study. To achieve that, an investigator can use a case study protocol and develop a case study database. These tactics should be used in the data collection phase of the research. (Yin, 2009, 40-45.)

The reliability of this particular case is ensured by accurate documentation of the research methods used in this case. Additionally, this research can be replicated by using the same methods and methodology with similar results. However, it is important to note that even though the research methodology is followed accurately by a second researcher, some of the results might be slightly different. This can be attributed to the fact that there is a constant change in technology and consumer behavior. The tools used in the experimentation phase might evolve or disappear completely and hence the replication might generate different results.

There are many ways to collect data for a case study and none of these procedures is distinctive to case study research. The methods are different from subject are to sub-

ject area and topic to topic. (Geering, 2007, 68.) In this thesis, I have used mini case studies, online surveys made by third party companies as well as individual research and experimentation. The advantage of using data from individual research and experimentation is that it enforces the results obtained from online surveys and mini case studies. Working with some of the tools presented in this study, confirmed the results from several online surveys as well as from the outcomes of the mini case studies. However, time is one of the main disadvantages for using the data collection methods mentioned before. For example, experimentation takes a long time until the data generated becomes relevant for the case study.

In this case study there might be some **ethical issues** concerning the gathering of data especially using the individual research and experimentation. In experimentation, there might be an issue with the objectivity of the tools experimented with. Certain tools can be favored over other due to their functionality and ease of use. A different researcher could find different tools and methods to arrive at the same conclusion and therefore there might be a slight subjectivity in this study.

4 Digital marketing strategy for Sofi-Filtration

Sofi Filtration is a young company that has not fully tested the potentials of marketing and especially of digital marketing. Analyzing and exploring these potentials can yield in new avenues for business growth as well as brand awareness. In the next chapters I look at the company and its current situation providing at the end of this paper with a clear path to follow.

4.1 The company

The two videos published on the company's website give a comprehensive description of the history and the product. The idea of a product that could revolutionize the industrial water filtration business started in 2010 when three engineers met in Helsinki and thought about such a concept. According to the Mr. Hakala, this concept was tested for the first time with computation fluid dynamics. The results and the theory looked very promising. Soon after the idea was tested, Sofi Filtration was established. The company was founded with government and private sector funding. Since its inception in 2011 the company's main goal and purpose was to develop the world's most efficient self-cleaning water filter. The company employs three full time employees and two part time ones. Currently the company's functions are divided among the three employees as follows:

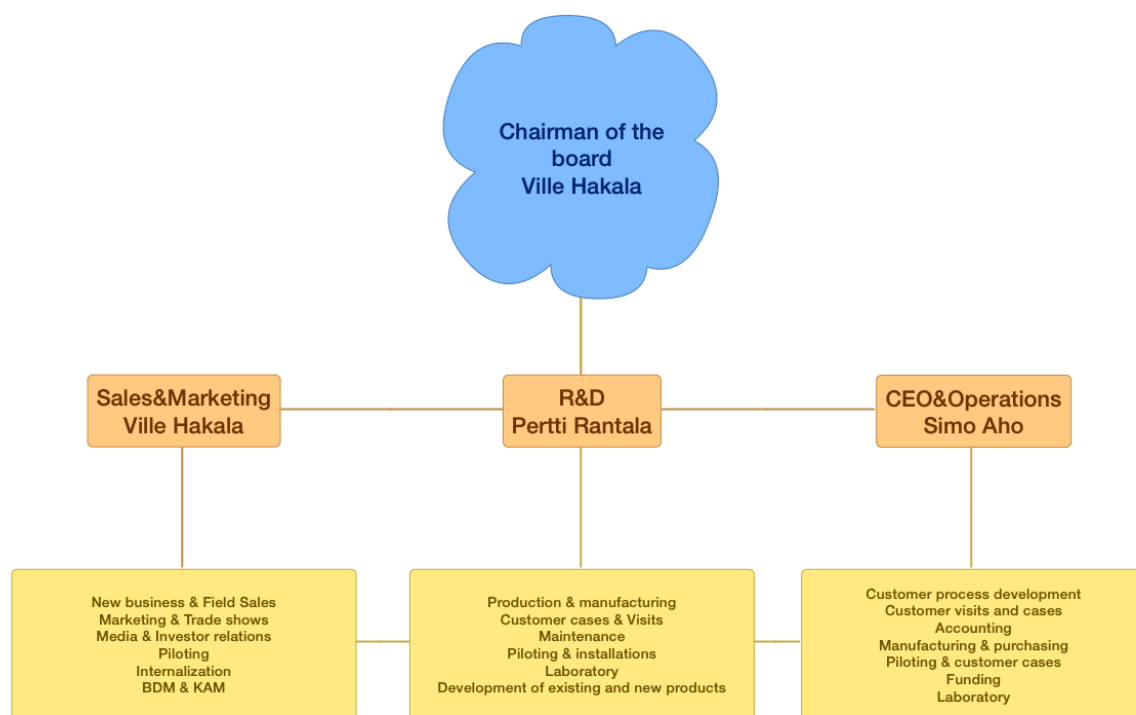


Figure 38. Sofi Filtration organizational chart 2013

The company has several piloting cases with several industry players in Finland and besides the potential of sales these cases generate a steady revenue flow as the company charges for the pilots. Sofi Filtration uses an extensive supply chain and subcontractors and is in talks with potential international sales partners from Benelux, Germany, Australia and Southern Africa. The first commercial Sofi Filter was sold and delivered to a client in Finland in December 2011.

Sofi Filtration has developed a groundbreaking product in the field of industrial water filtration. The patent for this technology has been granted and this gives Sofi Filtration an additional competitive advantage over its competitors. However, the patent has been granted only for Finland. Further countries are into consideration for patent application. The company is doing well so far, but employing a full time marketing/digital marketing manager is not viable at the moment. Currently the marketing needs are covered on an “as-it-comes” base by the company’s Vice President of Sales and Marketing, Mr. Ville Hakala. The sales function takes most of Mr. Hakala’s time and therefore the marketing duties are not treated with the same urgency. On top of the human resource needs the company is currently lacking the financial means to hire a full/part time marketing manager. Considering the current state of affairs described earlier, the

need for a digital marketing concept is sought to create awareness about the company brand and state of the art technology. It is expected that with an increased visibility in the online media, Sofi Filtration will also raise the interest of potential sales partners and customers.

4.2 The product - Sofi Filter

The Sofi filter is compact and takes very little space. On top of that, the filter is highly automated and it requires almost no maintenance. The Sofi innovation lies in the design of the product and more specifically in the way the dirty water is fed to filter. The dirty water is pushed with high velocity on top of the filter element and because of the speed and the design of the feed the clean water passes faster through the micro pores inside the element. Furthermore, the system does not allow the accumulation of solid particles on top of the filter element which normally slows down the filtration process. The innovative technology enables industry players to re-circulate their process waters inside their plants. This means that there is less fresh water intake and less waste water produced. The innovation has some impressive technological performances.



Figure 39. Sofi Filter. Sofi Filtration 2013

The following technical data is provided by Sofi Filtration and can be found also on the company website. (Sofi Filtration 2013)

- the filtration is based on high cross-flow value (>15 m/s)
- high capacity by innovative flow design
- measured capacities 3...30 m³/m²/h (#1...10 μm)
- automatic self-cleaning for continuous high capacity operation
- handles wide concentration range 1 mg/l to 100,000 mg/l
- typical energy consumption only 0.05 kWh/m³
- filter elements from 0.25 to 40μm sustaining pH range 0-14 even in high temperatures
- automatic clean-in-place ability; ultrasonic washing and back-flushing
- low energy consumption and pressure loss
- pressure drop 0.2...0.7 bar
- feed pressure 0.5...2 bar
- applicable from laboratory size to full industrial capacity needs
- long-life filter elements, such as sintered metal, ceramic and silicon carbide. (Sofi Filtration 2013)

The above technical values do not have any meaning for any reader if not compared to a similar or at least close enough potential competitor. It is important to mention at this stage that this is not a competitor analysis. For the purpose of showing the technical superiority of the Sofi Filter, I have chosen one company to compare data against.

The Tequatic Plus filter is produced by the Dow Chemical company and it is the closest competitor to Sofi Filtration even though it cannot be considered a direct competitor due to the differences in the microfiltration categories that each product operates in.

Item	TEQUATIC PLUS F-50	TEQUATIC PLUS F-75	TEQUATIC PLUS F-150
Flow Capacity (max) ¹	25 gpm (95 lpm)	100 gpm (380 lpm)	400 gpm (1500 lpm)
Filter Cutoff	10, 15, 20, 30, 50 µm	10, 15, 20, 30, 50 µm	10, 15, 20, 30, 50 µm
Temperature (max) ²	140°F (60°C)	140°F (60°C)	140°F (60°C)
pH	2–11	2–11	2–11
Maximum Working Pressure	100 psi (6.9 bar)	100 psi (6.9 bar)	100 psi (6.9 bar)
Weight			
Housing Lid	15.5 lbs (7 kg)	83 lbs (37.7 kg)	370 lbs (168.2 kg)
Housing Base	23 lbs (10.5 kg)	114 lbs (51.8 kg)	614 lbs (279.1 kg)
Dimensions (see Figure 2)			
A: Diameter	16" (40.6 cm)	27.5" (69.9 cm)	46" (116.5 cm)
B: Height	18" (45.7 cm)	31.5" (80 cm)	64.5" (163.8 cm)
Fittings (see Figure 2)			
C: Filtrate	2" Victaulic ³	3" Victaulic	6" Victaulic
D: Feedwater	2" Victaulic	3" Victaulic	6" Victaulic
E: Recirculation	2" Victaulic	3" Victaulic	6" Victaulic
F: Concentrate	2" Victaulic	2" Victaulic	4" Victaulic

¹Clean water ²Consult factory for higher temperatures ³Victaulic is a registered trademark of Victaulic Company

Figure 40. Tequatic Plus Filter. Technical specifications. Cleanfiltration.dow.com 2014.

When looking at figure 40, one can clearly see that there are differences between the two products. For example the filter cutoff values are quite different (Sofi filters particles as low as 1 micron compared with Tequatic's 10 micron) and furthermore, the Sofi Filter performs at very low pressure compared with Tequatic. This results in lower energy consumption and higher performance rates. Other traditional particle separation methods such as gravity settling, have failed to capture the finest particles from the industrial waste waters. The gravity settling method requires huge investments in football-size pools. The pools are then flooded with the dirty waters and with the help of gravity the particles will eventually settle down. Besides the costs associated with a method like gravity settling, one can always add the environmental challenges to such a difficult process.

4.3 Digital marketing situation and company SWOT

It is important to view the marketing and especially the digital marketing situation of the company before having a digital concept. An initial SWOT analysis of the current marketing situation is appropriate in the beginning of this study. Later in this paper, I will review the SWOT analysis form this chapter but at that stage I will take into account the recommendations and the digital marketing strategy resulted from this study.

Table 4. Company SWOT analysis.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Deep knowledge of mining and metallurgy – Vast experience in industrial water filtration – Long term vision – Unique and patented technology – Lots of customer cases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Lack of a dedicated marketing manager – Missing soft skills (communication, languages, leadership, social skills) – Lack of resources for marketing – Internal functions unevenly divided – Small company – Limited digital knowledge
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Brand awareness – Attract and form strategic partnerships – Become a standard in clean, industrial water filtration – Build a community around the brand – Become an known international expert in industrial water filtration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Time constraints – Cash balance – Debt burden – Competitors – Failing to keep up with the technology on the market – Copycats

Strengths

The company has a unique and patented technology that does not have a match on the market at this point. Sofi Filtration has an impressive knowledge of the mining and metallurgy industry. This gives them some competitive advantage over potential competitors. It is fair to say at this point that the company does not really have a competitor on the market as the technology is new, unique and it addresses a niche market. Another point of strength for Sofi Filtration is the fact that since its incorporation it has gathered a great number of customer cases through piloting their technology. The piloting is an ongoing process and probably will continue in the future too. This gives the company access to a variety of different test data and cases that could eventually be

transformed into white papers and expert cases. Last but not least, the long term vision of the company is a plus that can greatly influence its future.

Weaknesses

Sofi Filtration is a small company that employs only three people at the moment. This fact is seen in the distribution and allocation of company resources and functions. Because of limited resources the marketing function is almost inexistent. The company has completed some basic marketing functions such as product brochure and company website. However a more active approach cannot be achieved with the current setup. In part, the company is missing some soft skills such as communication to external and internal stakeholders and this has a direct impact on the marketing function. Sofi Filtrations' limited knowledge of digital marketing adds to the weaknesses found at this stage.

Opportunities

Due to its strengths, the company has good chances to raise the brand awareness as well as to form strategic partnerships and alliances with other players from the industry. Additionally the accumulated internal expertise in the industrial water filtration, metallurgical and mining industry, has the potential to translate the name "Sofi Filtration" to "industrial water filtration expert".

Threats

Time constraints are probably one of the biggest threats that Sofi Filtration faces. Piloting and customer cases take a large portion of time from the personnel's everyday tasks and this leaves little room for marketing activities. Being a startup, most of their finance comes from investors, institutional and private lenders. The debt burden and the current cash balance create an unwanted pressure on Sofi Filtrations' small team as well as limit the business decisions that can be made under these conditions.

4.4 The VRIO framework

On May 29, 2013 I attended a seminar at Aalto University in Helsinki where Professor Jay Barney gave an interesting presentation on strategic management and more specific on resource based view of a company and business. Having listened to Professor Bar-

ney I thought that Sofi Filtration would be the best case where this framework could be applied on. Sofi Filtration has, for now, a unique product that addresses a niche market. Analyzing the company from the VRIO point of view could reveal some of the key points that can be amplified within the digital marketing strategy. The VRIO framework stands for Value, Rarity, Imitability and Organization and puts under the examination the internal environment of a company. (Barney, 1991, 99-120.)

The VRIO framework explained:

The Value: Does the company possess a resource that enables it to utilize an environmental opportunity, and/or neutralize an environmental threat? The resource of the company can be anything from an innovative product to patents, applications or simply a business model. In our case Sofi Filtration has a unique and patented technology that is of tremendous value to the market.

The Rarity: The rarity looks into whether a resource is controlled by a small number of competing companies. As in the case of the value, these resources can be used to make products or services. Alternatively the products or services can be rare themselves. At the moment of writing this paper, the Sofi Filter can be considered a rare product and therefore adding to the competitive advantage of the company.

The Imitability: Having a difficult or almost impossible to imitate product or service can give a company a prolonged sustainable competitive advantage. Without a particular resource that would create a competitive advantage companies might face difficulties in developing their product. In this case the unique and innovative design of the Sofi filter is hard or almost impossible to imitate due to patent protection.

The Organization: This aspect of the VRIO framework looks at the company's internal procedures, policies and strategy that support the exploitation of the one unique, expensive to imitate and valuable resource. Besides the existing patent, Sofi Filtration does not have a set of procedures that would help them to maintain their competitive advantage.

By applying the VRIO framework to the case company, I will look at some of the components that give Sofi Filtration a competitive advantage. I will look at tangible resources, intangible resources and organizational resources.

Table 5. Tangible Resources of Sofi Filter based on the VRIO framework

Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Innovative industrial design – Patent and trademark – State of the art technology
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Great manufacture location – High technology machinery and equipment – State of the art technology in the company main product
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Small, flat organization
Finances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Currently the company is dependent on external funding – Angel investors are getting a piece of the company – Sofi Filtration is able to raise capital from private and state stakeholders

Table 6. Intangible Resources of Sofi Filter based on the VRIO framework

<p>Human</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Long term vision – International experience, B2B sales and marketing – Variety of technical skills from different backgrounds
<p>Innovation and Creativity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Great technical expertise in the mining and metallurgical industry – Innovative design for the Sofi Filter
<p>Reputation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Good reputation among test companies – Adaptability to customer needs – Customized filtration solutions

Table 7. Organizational Capabilities of Sofi Filter based on the VRIO framework

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Very good customer service – Good development capabilities – Good mix of technical and business skills
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Probably the best explanation of the VRIO framework comes from Barney himself.



Figure 41. Prof. Jay Barney presenting the VRIO framework in Helsinki

From this analysis, it is safely to conclude that the technology behind the Sofi Filter can be seen as the most valuable resource of the company. It can therefore give a temporary competitive advantage as it can be considered rare at the moment. The patent protection makes the technology hard or impossible imitate, at least for the time being. The temporary competitive advantage can be then utilized in the branding and marketing of the company.

4.5 Sofi Filtration, how to lead by branding

Using the courses provided by HAAGA-HELIA is ideal to support the thesis. One of the courses that supported this study was the course “Leading by Branding”. This virtual course gave me the necessary theory and applied cases that helped with the digital concept. Additionally, during this course I have used the power of crowd sourcing by having a case study for the class where the students have tried to find solutions and give recommendations. Below is a description of the case that the course lecturer, Matti Helelä, and I designed:

“A small clean tech company has a revolutionary product for industrial water filtration. The brand is not yet very well known on its home market or internationally. The technology is nonetheless ground breaking and there are no similar products on the market. The company is using some traditional marketing tools, such as fairs and trade shows but does not have any online presence in the true sense. The company website is managed externally, and the company recently created a profile on LinkedIn. The newly appointed brand manager is wondering how to generate awareness about the company and its technology and, at the same time, to bring in some sales. The company needs qualified sales leads and the name of the company should eventually become a standard in the industry. How to put the company’s name on everyone’s lips? Considering the small, almost non-existent budget, the brand manager is looking to find new ways to complete his task.”

The task was especially interesting due to the similarities in solutions provided by the students as well as the different perspectives to the same problem. Some of the students knew the name Sofi Filtration and hence the study was kept anonymous, meaning that the company name was not provided to the students. This eliminated the biases and provided more objective solutions. There were 15 students divided into 3 groups. Each group had to work on the same case and provide their theoretical framework to back up their recommendations for the case they were studying. The findings have been quite consistent with the literature review from this study as well as with my professional experience in the digital marketing field.

Group 1

- Website at the center of brand image. Call to action on every page
- Content marketing
- Content marketing should be easy to: understand, find, share and consume
- Community outreach: industry influencers, industry specific discussion boards and forums
- Consistency throughout the whole marketing communication spectrum
- Start company blog with news, cases and posts that are relevant to the industry. Invite guest writers to write on your blog
- Email marketing and newsletters
- Social media presence on relevant sites

- LinkedIn: share within relevant groups, comment on posts, create company page with info and news
- Twitter: follow influencers, direct people to your content, share and promote relevant content
- Social Media Branding: Company blog, Twitter, LinkedIn
- Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
- Video marketing on relevant sites.

Group 2

- B2B buyer behavior is different. Buyer-customer relationship has to be built on different channels
- Website at the center of the digital marketing strategy. Capture lead direct from the website
- Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
- Email marketing
- Pay Per Click advertising on Google, Bing, etc.
- Educate your audience through: company blog and relevant social media
- Consistency throughout the whole marketing communication portfolio
- Social media to be used for: networking, news monitoring and distribution, becoming a leader in the industry, active listening, follow the influencers in the industry.
- Online presence is not enough. The audience needs regularity, consistency and value.
- Social media integration must be in line with the company's brand communication strategy
- Slideshare for more exposure and SEO.

Group 3

The results of this group are mostly images and are summarized below.

- Website is the core of the digital marketing strategy.
- Social media, company blog, SEO should all be integrated with the company webpage and overall marketing communication
- Create and promote your story on social media and among selected target groups

- Consistency on all channels
- Include all stakeholders in your target audience: investors, universities, experts, clients, etc.
- Observe how people use social media and act accordingly
- Use pay per click advertising as well as free advertising tools.

Figure 41 gives an overview of the results from the small class experiment. This overview can be interpreted as a mind map for a digital marketing strategy and branding for a small and medium sized company.

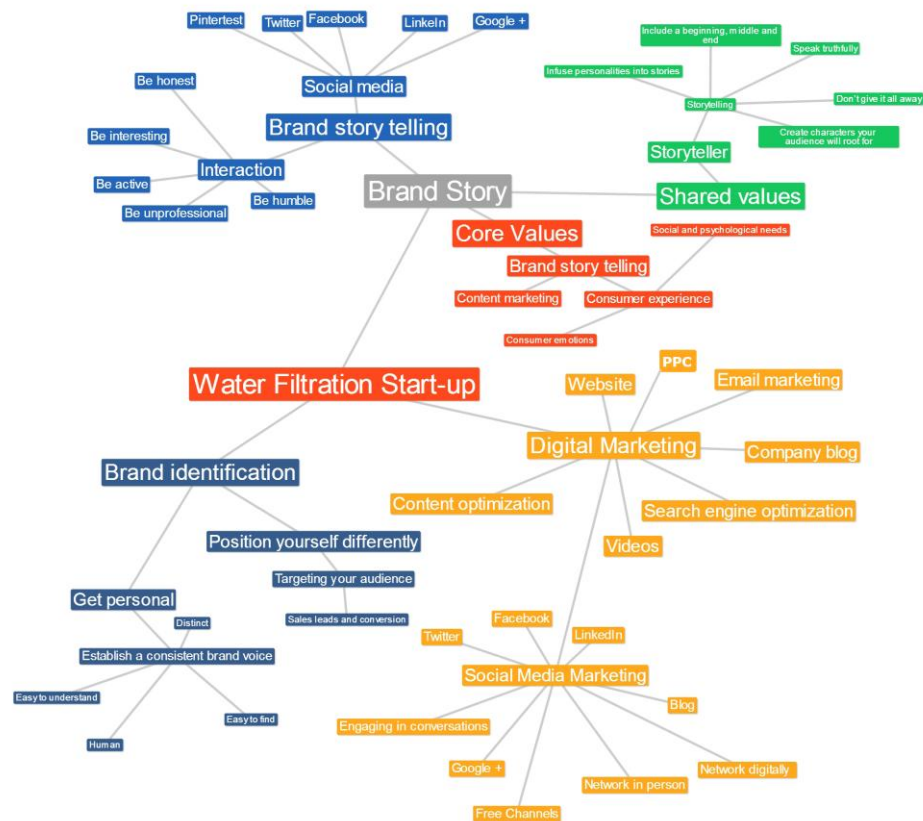


Figure 42. Digital outcome from class experiment Leading by Branding

The detailed conversations of every individual group can be found in the attachments section of this paper as attachment 9.

4.6 Digital strategy for Sofi Filtration

The digital marketing strategy for Sofi Filtration is designed for a one year cycle. It can be implemented and run along with the traditional marketing strategy that Sofi Filtration has crafted. Additionally, this strategy can help the company to evaluate where it stands and think about where it wants to be at the same time next year.

The following strategy is focusing on three main goals:

- generate traffic
- improve awareness
- increase sales

Each of these goals has different tools and tactics that can be assigned to them. The tools and strategies associated with each goal should not be viewed as belonging only to the goals assigned. There is an interrelationship between the goals themselves and the tools presented in this plan. For example, generating more traffic can lead to an increase in sales or improved brand awareness. Or, an increase in sales can lead to an increase in brand awareness. Hence these goals can be seen as working very tight together, almost as one goal which could be simply called: business growth.

To ensure the success of every action in this, the participation of all Sofi Filtration's employees is required. This means that everybody is part of the digital landscape and contributes to the success of the strategy. As the company is fairly small, employee participation and involvement should not cause any difficulties. There are a few very simple tasks that each employee can do to ensure the implementation of the plan. These tasks are mentioned in the digital marketing plan attached to this thesis. Creating a plan that is in form of an eBook comes from the idea that the company should be able to print and use this plan whenever they want without reading through this thesis every time they need guidance. Additionally, this plan could be used and implemented in any small and medium sized company that seeks to have a digital presence and increase its brand awareness among its target audience. The eBook was written and edited with Pages, Apple's document processing editor. This means that it might not accu-

rately follow the HAAGA-HELIA writing guidelines. The eBook can be found in the attachments section of this paper as attachment10.

4.7 SWOT analysis for a digital marketing concept

The following SWOT looks at the case company taking into consideration the newly designed digital marketing plan. If implemented, the SWOT of the company could look as presented in table 7.

Table 8. SWOT table for the case company with the digital marketing plan in place

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The company’s expertise in mining, metallurgy and filtration – Clear digital strategy and goals – Unique and patented technology – Lots of cases from different industries and sectors – Valuable and hard to imitate product 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Lack of a dedicated marketing manager – Missing soft skills (communication, languages, leadership, social skills) – Lack of resources for marketing – A goal oriented website
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Increase brand awareness – Generate quality sales leads – Build a community around the brand – Become a known international expert in industrial water filtration – Increased customer engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Time constraints – Lack of consistency and follow through on the digital plan – Financial trouble

We can see from table 8 that there are some changes when compared with table 4 in this paper. Most of the changes result in the strengths and opportunity section of the

SWOT as these are generated by the newly designed digital plan. The threats are somehow similar with the ones in the previous SWOT analysis. The only additional threat that I have identified here would be the lack of consistency and follow through on the digital marketing plan. This threat can be as important as a low cash balance as it will not bring any results if not implemented and followed through.

On the other hand, the opportunities that present themselves after having a digital marketing plan designed and implemented, can have a positive impact on Sofi Filtration. While building a community around its brand and becoming an important voice in the industrial water filtration business, the case company has the chance to attract more quality leads, increase the brand awareness as well as develop long lasting business partnerships.

The potential for Sofi Filtration is huge as it follows through the plan. It is important to note that the actions that Sofi Filtration takes along the digital landscape will not generate immediate results. They can, but typically this is highly unlikely. Building brand awareness and a community around a brand takes time and dedication. However, even the smallest changes can be monitored and tracked in digital. Therefore it is important for the company to measure the effects of every step of the strategy. In return, this will build up the necessary confidence that is needed for continuing with the strategy.

4.8 Implementation schedule and costs

The implementation schedule depends on the company decision to implement this plan with the current human resources or to hire a dedicated marketing manager. A full time marketing manager could add between 3000 to 4000 Euros to the monthly expenses. Hiring a dedicated marketing manager will ensure the implementation and success of this strategy. However, in the absence of extra human resources the company might face delays as well as consistency issues when implementing the digital marketing plan. Some of the digital channels have been already created and a regular activity is maintained on those. For example, the Sofi Filtration Twitter account and the LinkedIn page have been already created and are currently maintained by the author of this paper. In only a few months the Twitter account has gathered 7 followers and the

LinkedIn company page has 26 followers. This has been achieved with weekly posts on LinkedIn and Twitter. Additionally, the two company videos have been viewed on YouTube so far by 269 respectively 228 viewers. Even though the numbers are small there is great potential to increase those numbers by implementing consistently the proposed digital marketing strategy and plan.

A detailed schedule for the implementation of the digital marketing plan can be found in attachment 10

5 Conclusions

The literature review as well as the numerous studies and surveys presented in this thesis have shown how the digital environment has changed the way customers interact with companies and brands throughout the purchasing process. Today, consumers take their buying decision process online. They research, request information and evaluate a product before making the purchasing decisions. After the purchase is complete, clients usually continue to follow and engage with the brand. This is done by writing reviews, making recommendations online and to peers as well as directly interacting with the brand for support or after sales activities.

I believe that the main research question “How can digital marketing help a small start-up company to generate more sales leads and increase their brand awareness among their target audience?” has been extensively answered throughout this paper. However, several answers can be summarized here. Digital Marketing can help a small start-up to achieve a lots of goals only if the company decides to embrace the digital. By utilizing the digital tools analyzed in this study and by consistently engaging its target audience with relevant content, Sofi Filtration can generate more sales leads as well as raise awareness about its brand. In addition to that, the adoption and implementation of the digital strategy resulted from this study can offer, in time, additional answers to the main research question.

The components and tools of a digital marketing strategy that can be applied successfully and cost effectively to a small start-up company are as follow:

- Content marketing
- Email marketing
- Social media
- Video marketing
- Search engine optimization
- Pay per click advertising (Google AdWords)
- Digital analytics (Google Analytics)

Ryan & Jones (2009) point out that every digital strategy should be based on a solid foundation of knowing the business, the competition, and the customers as well as having a clear vision about the goals of the strategy. For Sofi Filtration this means a careful investigation into its own business and deciding if the tools, concepts and strategy outlined in this paper are suitable for them.

In today's business environment it is important to understand that the buying decision has shifted from one decision maker to several people that are organized in a buying center structure. Chernatony & McDonald (2003), point out that understanding who these people are and what are the roles they play within the buying center, can help brand marketers to better position their brand within that organization. It becomes clear that Sofi Filtration has to engage these people in new ways as well as connect with its customers where they are mostly present.

The VRIO framework applied to Sofi Filtration revealed that the company has a temporary competitive advantage over its competitors. The results of the VRIO analysis can translate in brand messages when engaging the audience. Vast expertise and adaptability to customer need could be some of the main selling points for Sofi Filtration.

In a way, digital marketing can be seen as a form of art where one creates and the other enjoys and consumes the creation. While writing this paper and experimenting with most of the tools described here, I can only recommend to Sofi Filtration the adoption and implementation of the strategy resulted from this research. The company has therefore the chance to experiment with this plan and create a new way to engage its audience and increase its business.

The designed strategy assumes that the company website is designed according to the latest standards in web design as well as in accordance with the company brand and overall marketing strategy. This is an important aspect of digital marketing as most, if not all tools in described in this paper point to company website. Hence, I would recommend Sofi Filtration to evaluate the effectiveness of its website and maybe further investigate this matter in a new study. Due to limited resources, paid digital tools and services have been omitted from this study. After implementing, running and evaluat-

ing the strategy designed in this paper for at least a year, Sofi Filtration can start examining the possibility of experimenting with paid marketing automation tools. This will bring things to the next level.

The learning process during this study has been exciting and rewarding at the same time. I have learned about new tools and concepts such as the buyer persona and the VRIO framework that I believe are relevant to the case company for their future business activities. Additionally, I have learned that the digital landscape is changing faster than I anticipated. Consumers/customers are the ones that dictate these fast changes and this is forcing companies to be more flexible and always ready for change.

Looking back to the whole process of this study, I would maybe try to keep it together and finalize it in one go with no interruptions or breaks. The time spent to write this study could have been reduced to 6 months or less if I would have followed a stricter schedule. However, now and then life happens and things do not come out as we expected to.

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Attachments

Attachment 1. Buyer persona template

The page is intentionally left empty as attachment 1 is added after this page in a format that allows the company to print the document out and use it without any changes or school marks.

Buyer Persona Template

Buyer Persona Creation Template

PERSONA NAME	
BACKGROUND (ex: Job, Careers, Title, Family)	
DEMOGRAPHICS (ex: Age, Sex, Location, Income, etc)	
IDENTIFIERS (ex: Demeanors, Communication Preferences, etc.)	

Buyer Persona Template

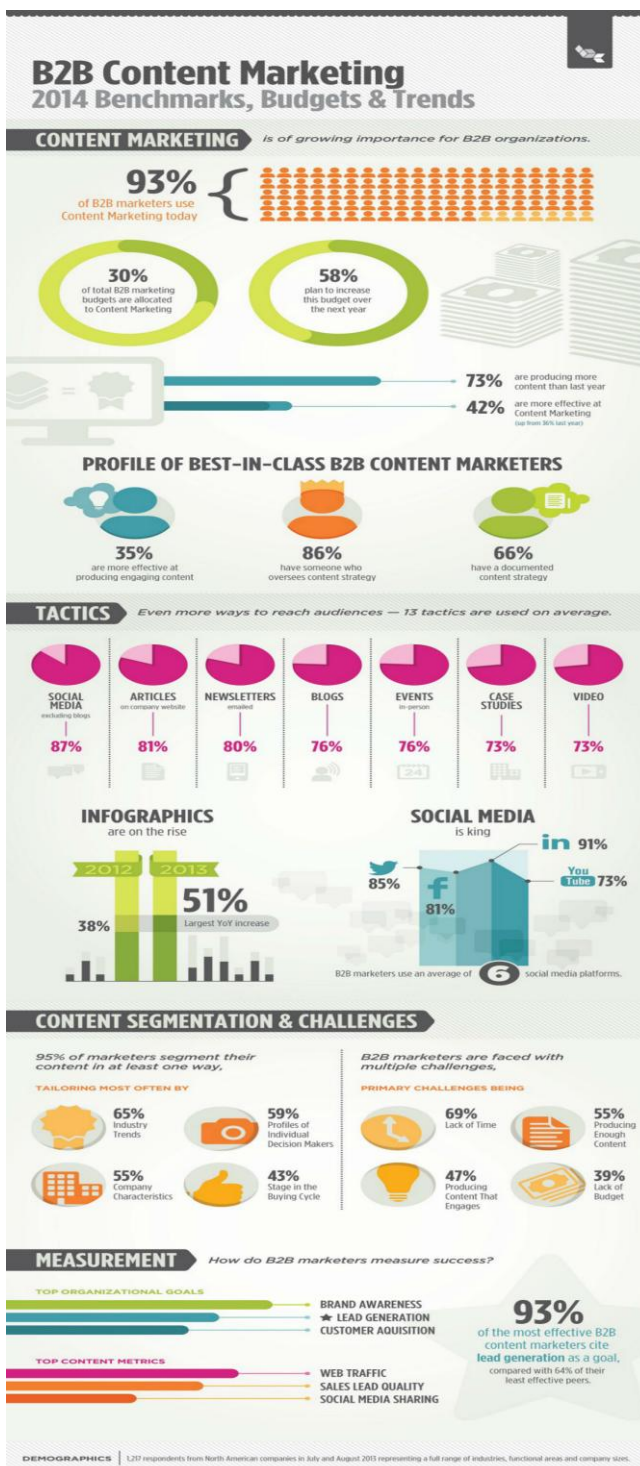
PERSONA NAME	
GOALS (ex: Primary and Secondary Goals of our Persona)	
CHALLENGES (ex: Primary and Secondary Challenges for our Persona)	
WHAT CAN WE DO TO... ...to help our persona reach their goals and overcome their challenges?	

Buyer Persona Template

PERSONA NAME	
MOST COMMON OBJECTIONS (ex: Why don't they buy our product/service?)	
OUR MARKETING MESSAGING (ex: Value proposition, benefits, etc)	
OUR ELEVATOR PITCH	

Attachment 2. How Finnish Startups View Media Advertising (Infographic)





Attachment 4. 50 Tried and True Social Insights

The page is intentionally left empty as attachment 4 is added after this page in a pdf format.

50

Tried and True

SOCIAL

INSIGHTS

FROM
REAL
MARKETERS



In 2012, Marketo embarked on our Social Marketing Rockstar Tour where we visited 15 cities across the nation to talk about implementing, executing, and measuring social strategy. We met marketing interns all the way up the ladder to CEOs, spoke to marketers from every industry, and networked with both large companies of 10,000+ employees and small companies of 10. The common denominator? An intense interest in social media and a desire to learn how to use it more holistically in every marketing campaign.

Every organization uses social in a different way. At each stop on the tour we collected insights from over 2000 customer attendees on how they are using social in their marketing today, plus any tips and lessons that they have learned along the way. We have gone through each entry and have compiled the best of the best!

HERE ARE OUR
TOP 50
TRIED AND TRUE
INSIGHTS
FROM REAL
SOCIAL MARKETERS

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

1

Make sure you have the ability to track “who” your social followers are and “where” they go. And then use that data to nurture.

Barbara Holt @barbaraholt
Marketing Communications Specialist, Rimage/Qumu

2

- 1) Control your message.
- 2) Make your message consistent.
- 3) Put a social media policy in place.

Lyndsey McDermard @YSIinc
Marcom Coordinator, YSI, Inc

3

Try not to post too much company centric news--you will almost always be bragging too much. We learned to post more relevant industry and analyst news to balance out our promotions.

Lauren Twele @Symplified
Online Marketing Manager, Symplified

4

Oversharing and not listening. Social is a 2-way conversation!

Paul Odnoletkov @Geosoft
Global Marketing Associate, Geosoft, Inc.

5

Don't just push content links. Engage! It has to be a conversation.

Jared Jost @SmarshInc
Marketing Analyst, Smarsh

6

More is not necessarily better. Post things that are relevant, useful, and thoughtful rather than just lots of posts.

Paul Odnoletkov @Geosoft
Global Marketing Associate, Geosoft, Inc.

7

When someone posts on a social channel, you need to try and immediately respond. Don't fall victim to poor “listening.”

David George @SystemSensor
Director, Marketing Communications, Honeywell

8

Lessons learned: not linking our social platforms together and being too “self-focused”. Also, you need to provide relevant content to target audiences.

Liz Bartek @Liz_Bartek
Senior Internet Marketing Consultant, Social Media

9

Listen using Radian6. We have a presence across all common platforms (FB, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc). We actively push out promotional messages, and engage with and respond to brand mentions.

Stephen Allcock @questrade
Supervisor, Marketing Automation, Questrade

10

Always test to see what works in paid advertising. And then constantly re-assess based on your findings.

Jill Petre @jillpetre
Marketing Coordinator, SendGrid

11

Integrate your social media tactics into a tool that tracks your outreach, so you can see what works and what doesn't

Marchell Gillis @MarchellGillis
Digital PR Manager

12

It can be difficult to monetize social media when you are learning! Try not to be too conservative at first.

Frank D. Sledge @Circadence
Corporate Communications/Legal Affairs, Circadence



13

Measurement is more than last click/referral attribution. Other KPIs should include engagement, amplification, and reach.

Kelly Cooper @kellyjcoop
Marketing Manager, ShopIgniter

14

Always use social media to reach prospects and customers. And measure the influence of your current efforts in terms of demand generation.

Dorinne Hoss @Cleversafe
Marketing Manager, Cleversafe

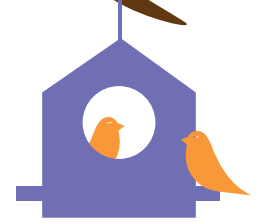
MEASURE AND ITERATE



15

Cast a wide net with Facebook ads and make sure you are incentivizing sharing.

Adam Barker @Educated_Travel
Web Marketing and Design Manager, NETC



16

Social media with limited paid ads is priming the pump. But then know when to dial down the paid and let it grow organically.

Michael Kolowich @MichaelKolowich
CEO KnowledgeVision

17

Reaction time with responding to Tweets increases conversion rates. Also, remember to gather data about your prospects via social channels!

Kareem Ghanie @KGhanie
Director of Demand Gen, NetDNA



IDEAS TO GENERATE SOCIAL LIFT

18

While running contests and collecting email addresses, make sure to send periodic lead nurture updates throughout the contest so the entrants stay familiar with your brand.

Nicole Aguilar @COOPTHINK
Interactive Marketing Manager, Co-op Financial Services

19

When doing sweepstakes and giveaways, make the prizes something of value and of interest. Then promote the winners.

Harini Prasad @HariniPrasad
Customer Marketing Manager, BigMachines

20

Tie social media incentives into tradeshow sweepstakes. As an example, instead of just a fishbowl at an event, “Like” us on Facebook and enter to win an iPad. Start with small incentives to avoid pushback and then demonstrate ROI.

Rebecca McNeil @RebeccaAnn0212
Inbound Marketing Manager, PR Manager,
HealthcareSource

21

We have found that beyond promoting our events, programs, and industry news, sharing our daily corporate lives, injecting humor, and showing our human side on social media has been very valuable for our brand.

Jenna Keegan @CoreSecurity
Marketing Specialist, CORE Security

22

We use Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Pinterest, SlideShare, blog, Google+, etc. We promote content, such as whitepapers, events, webinars, etc, across all social channels. Use them to reinforce each other. For example, a blog post can influence Tweets which can drive downloads of relevant whitepapers.

Will Wiegler @WillWiegler
CMO, The TAS Group



23

We have a Twitter contest once a quarter. We have found that iPad giveaways are always popular but always seem to bring in followers that will never buy our product.

Katie McKay @deskstone
Marketing Coordinator, Deskstone

24

We do frequent email blasts with share buttons. New product releases and webinars are announced via the blog, Facebook, and Twitter.

Nicole Aguilar @COOPTHINK
Interactive Marketing Manager, Co-op
Financial Service



25

Multi-share referrals, publicize events/updates, sweepstakes, product polls, content sharing, share buttons in emails and on landing pages.

Czarina Carden @HomeFinder1
Senior Marketing Manager, Homefinder.com



26

Friday freebies! We do a small giveaway every week. We get product feedback, use cases, and product development information. We also get a “soft” lead for sales to follow up on.

Brandi Brown @brandiheinz
Social Media and eCommerce Manager, ETA
Hand2Mind

27

We use social channels to drive traffic to our blog and engage with our influencers. All of our customers (let’s say 99%) are potential upsells, so engaging with them through social is critical.

Rebecca McNeil @RebeccaAnn0212
Inbound Marketing Manager, PR Manager,
HealthcareSource

28

For everyone who follows us on Twitter, we give them access to a piece of content.

Katherine Fawcett @buildingengines
Marketing Associate, Building Engine



SOCIAL MARKETING WORDS OF WISDOM

29

Don't abandon traditional tools--
bake social into every existing app!

Craig Probus @RevCultCraig
Practice manager, RevCult

30

If you don't do it, you
don't make mistakes!

Emily Hossellman @ehossellman
Marketing Goddess, Centercode

31

Inconsistency is the
biggest mistake. Also, you
need to make all of your
campaigns social.

Ashley Pater @GTreasury
Marketing Director, GTreasury

32

Create a genuine voice
and build meaningful,
trustworthy relationships.

Emerly Soong @ETAhand2mind
eCommerce and Social Media Intern,
ETA Hand2Mind

33

Don't commit and
then stop. You need to
maintain and build.

Steve Susina @ssusina
Director of Demand Generation, Crain
Business Insurance

34

Have balance between push and pull
tactics, make sure you have enough
cross engagement, and pay attention to
targeted messaging.

Czarina Carden @HomeFinder1
Senior Marketing Manager, Homefinder.com

35

A lesson learned is not
having a launch plan like any
other launch of a program.

Marci Acquaviva @ncircletweets
nCircle

36

We're in the real estate
industry--very much still an
old-school "handshake"
business. The challenge is
bringing those "handshakes"
into a digital environment.

Sarah Fisher @buildingengines
Marketing and Communications Director,
Building Engines

37

Include social across all
campaigns to build an
audience, and get more
content to feed your funnel.

Bill Copeland @MarketSight
Director of Marketing, MarketSight

38

Do not treat social as a
separate channel. Social
should be integrated into all
of your campaigns.

Stephen Allcock @questrade
Supervisor, Marketing Automation, Questrade

CONTENT IS KING!

39

Make sure you are always on top of content generation and thinking about the next post/engagement.

Simon Poulton @SPoulton
Marketing Analyst, LaserFiche

40

People love video! Visual content is key on social channels. And remember not to censor comments.

Nimmy Reichenberg @AlgoSec
VP of Marketing, AlgoSec

41

Titles are everything when it comes to content. If users are not grabbed by the titles, the content is useless. Layout is also extremely important, as poor formats can turn people away before they absorb your intended message. Create interesting headlines and develop engaging layouts.

Nick Krone @buildingengines
Marketing Intern, Building Engines

42

Combine both inbound and outbound content.

Kara Lanio @karalanio
Marketing Specialist, Imprivata

43

Content is king! And it must be relevant to your target audience. Tweets and Facebook posts go way up with great content.

Heidi Gilmore @cloudbees
Marketing Communications, CloudBees

SOCIAL IS A GROUP EFFORT

44

Social Media takes executive buy-in to engage others in the organization.

Adam Berman @SpartaSystems
Online Marketing Manager, Sparta Systems

45

We have learned that in social media marketing we have to both guide our customers and teach them how to share our content.

Sarah Sullivan @Sarah_Sull
Social Media Intern, HealthcareSource

48

Make sure you have company involvement!

Michele Greenberg @MicheleG_Akibia
Marketing Manager Akibia

46

Social media needs to be de-centralized. Empower your SMEs (Subject Matter Experts) to respond and increase responsiveness.

Bob Anders @HoneywellNow
Writer, Honeywell

49

Social can't be siloed, it must be integrated with global campaigns.

Kristin Amico @kamico
PR and Social Media Manager,
Click Software

47

We market to school teachers and administrators. Teachers are more socially active, but they generally don't have the buying power. However, they are big influencers. We need to make it easy and ask more explicitly for them to share our products.

Jemilah Senter @ETAhand2mind
Sr Manager, Marketing Communications,
ETA Hand2Mind

50

Our social strategy relies on influencers and industry leaders. We provide content that is full of data and analytics. This works as a preview to our larger reports.

Eugene Ko @PhoCusWright
Manager, Digital Marketing,
PhocusWright



ABOUT MARKETO

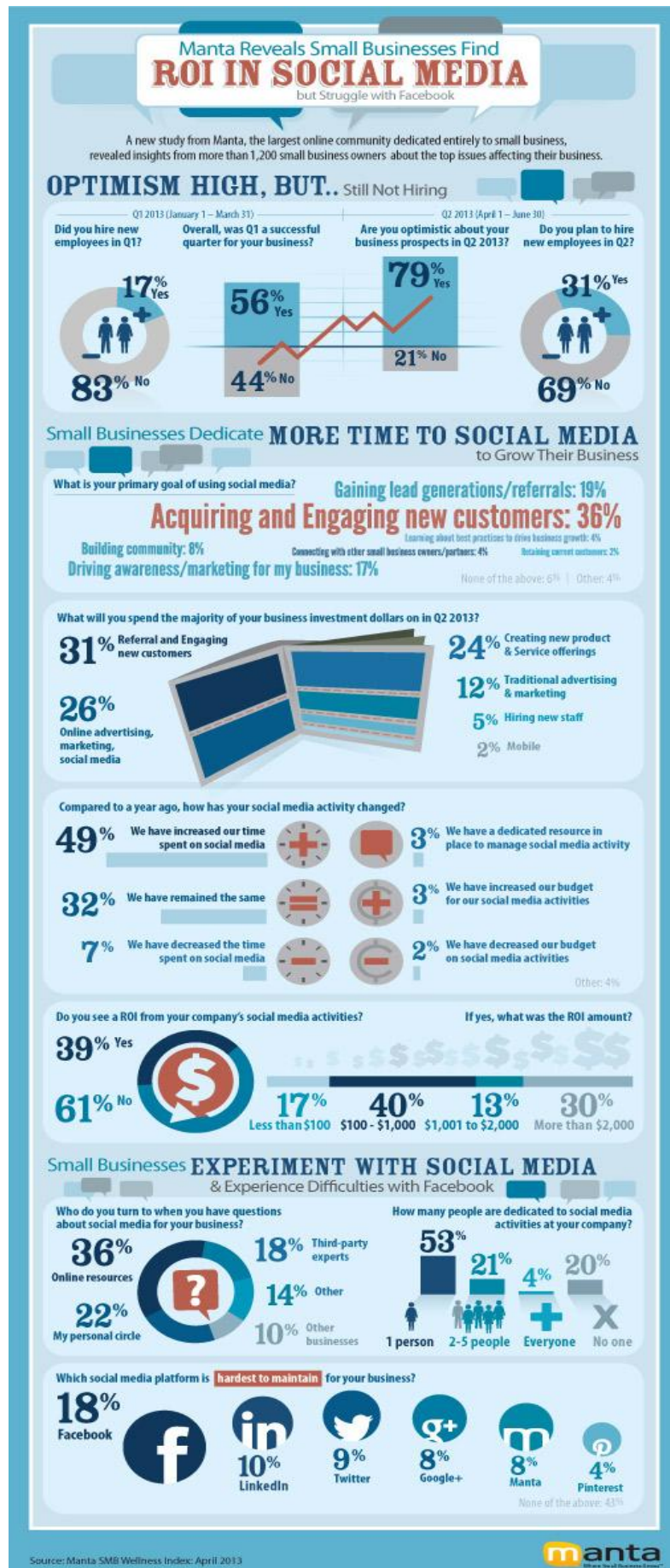
MARKETING SOFTWARE - EASY, POWERFUL, COMPLETE.

Marketo uniquely provides easy-to-use, powerful and complete marketing software that propels fast-growing small companies and global enterprises alike. Marketo™ marketing automation and sales effectiveness software – including the world's first integrated solution for social marketing automation – streamlines marketing processes, delivers more campaigns, generates more win-ready leads, and dramatically improves sales performance. With proven technology, comprehensive services and expert guidance, Marketo helps thousands of companies around the world turn marketing from a cost center into a revenue driver.

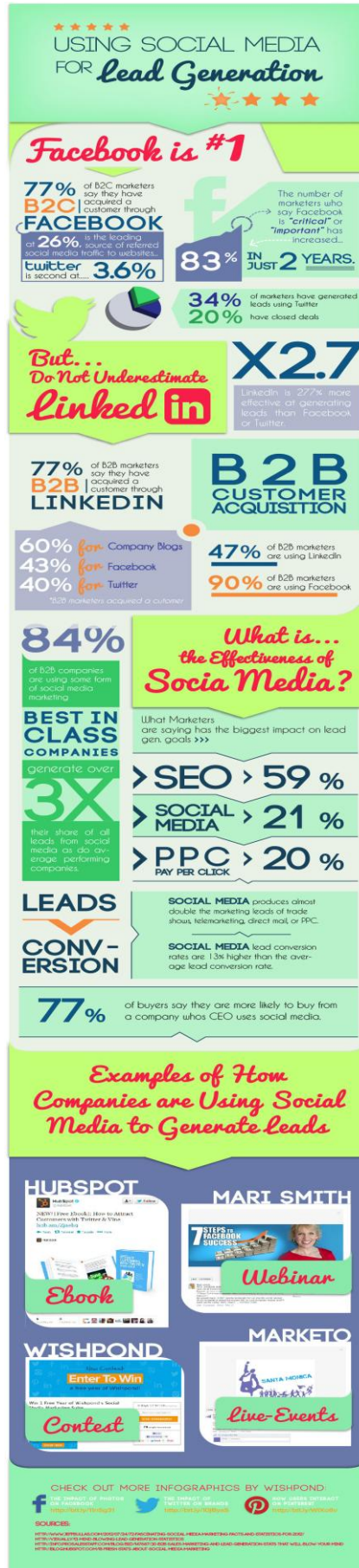
U.S.A. Headquarters
901 Mariners Island Blvd, Suite 200
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Tel: + 650.376.2300
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blog.marketo.com
www.twitter.com/marketo

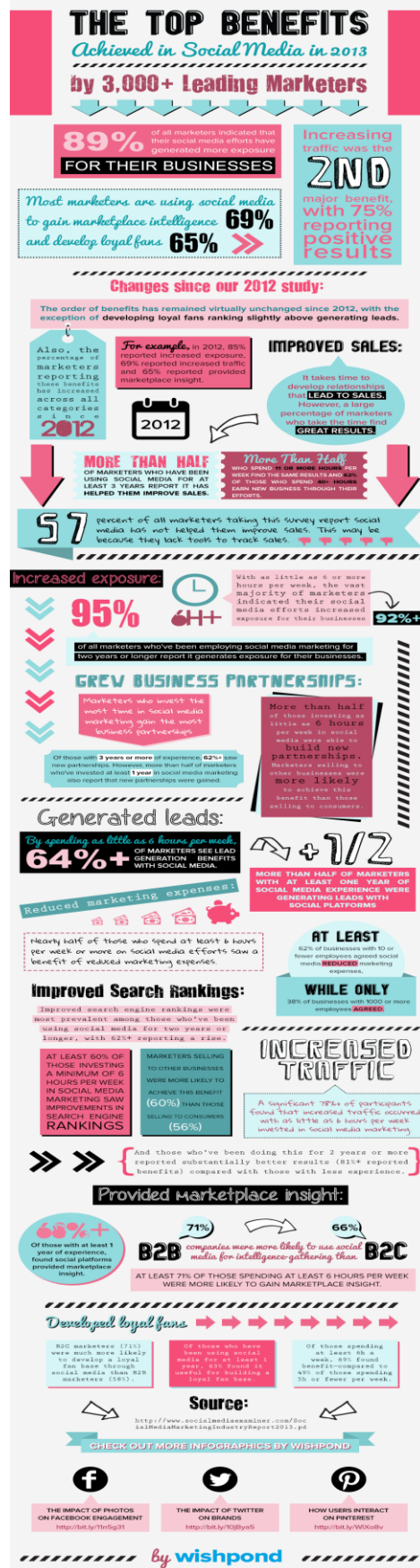
EMEA Ltd.
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AUSTRALIA Pty Ltd
Level 7
222 Pitt Street
Sydney, NSW 2000, Australia
Toll Free AU: 1800 352270



Attachment 6. Using social media for lead generation. Infographic.





Attachment 8. 50 Social Media Best Practices by SalesForce.com

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A large, golden, 3D-style number '50' is centered on the page. The background is a vibrant blue with faint, white, abstract network-like lines and social media icons (Facebook 'f', Twitter bird, and a smartphone) scattered around the number.

Social Media Best Practices

Table of Contents

- Introduction 3
- Social Media Listening 4
 - 1. Research where people are talking about you. 4
 - 2. Go beyond Facebook and Twitter and monitor the entire social web. 4
 - 3. Create a keyword list that extends your listening reach beyond profile mentions 4
 - 4. Make listening a company-wide endeavor 5
 - 5. Develop relationships with influencers in your industry 5
 - 6. Create categories to organize mentions 5
 - 7. Draft reports to help shape future marketing endeavors 5
 - 8. Create a crisis management plan before it's too late 6
 - 9. Automate what you can, but don't remove the human element 6
 - 10. Sentiment analysis is a mixed bag, so fine tune the results 6
- Social Media Engagement 7
 - 11. Create awareness 7
 - 12. Be mindful of oversharing 7
 - 13. Don't always feel compelled to jump in 7
 - 14. Be as transparent as your business allows 7
 - 15. Determine your tone 8
 - 16. Help your customers become experts in your field 8
 - 17. Be proactive 9
 - 18. Respond to negative AND positive feedback 9
 - 19. Keep it short 10
 - 20. Follow your following 10
 - 21. Treat each social network as its own entity 10
 - 22. Always provide an option to share 10
 - 23. Set up publishing and approval permissions and processes 11
 - 24. Build for mobile 11

- 25. Don't forget about nights and weekends 11
- 27. Use your data to determine what works 12
- 28. Set a content calendar that syncs up with other marketing objectives. . . . 12
- 29. Implement tracking codes on links 12
- 30. Don't be afraid to experiment with different platforms and content 12
- Social Media Advertising. 13**
- 31. Set your advertising goals first 13
- 32. Create both daily and lifetime budgets for your campaigns 13
- 33. Research the social advertising platforms 13
- 34. Fit your social ad campaigns in the context of other advertising initiatives 13
- 35. Match available targeting options with your advertising objectives 14
- 36. Test, test, test 14
- 37. Automate wherever possible 14
- 38. Don't forget about time of day and scheduling 15
- 39. Determine the metrics that will best represent your campaign status 15
- 40. Set regular meetings to analyze metrics 15
- 41. Align your objectives with your metrics 16
- 42. Pick a goal 16
- 43. Segment and trend 17
- 44. Track and measure social media leads and purchases 17
- 45. Measure cost savings 17
- 46. Create a central dashboard to bring in disparate metrics 18
- 47. Determine how you'll define ROI 18
- 48. Be prepared to pivot on everything 18
- 49. Clichéd metrics are great, but they aren't for everyone. 19
- 50. Use every available measurement tool 19
- Conclusion 20**

Introduction

Traditional marketing gurus have decades worth of best practices to build, tweak and optimize. Social media marketing, however, has had a far more compressed window of time from which to glean insights. With a constantly evolving roster of social networks and capabilities, brands and agencies often have to adjust on a moment's notice in order to keep pace with the social landscape. This makes the process of creating best practices, which at heart are strategies that have been applied successfully over time, that much more of an opportunity.

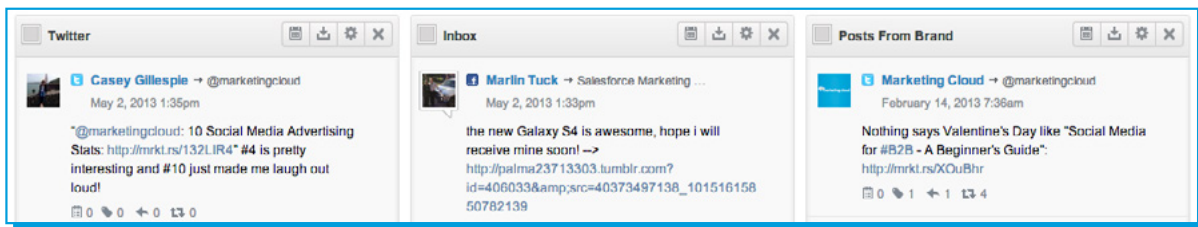
Based on the experiences of our customers, colleagues and our own marketing teams, we've culled 50 social media best practices to share in this ebook. You may find that some of your own best practices completely contradict items on this list. The beauty of social media marketing is that there are tons of ways to accomplish your goals. But if you're looking for ideas to get you started, or to further your existing efforts, we've got you covered.

Social Media Listening

It all starts with social media listening. While it doesn't need to be the first thing you do when you wake up and the last thing you do before you go to bed (though it certainly can be!), it should be the first thing you do when constructing a social media strategy. Here are 10 ideas to get started and enhance your social listening plan.

1. Research where people are talking about you

The first step in the process is tuning your social antennae, so to speak, to the right channels. You may have an obvious list of places on which people are discussing your business; if so, make sure you've devoted proper coverage to monitor them. Remember that social properties on the web have numerous places where people can talk about you. Facebook Pages, Twitter hashtags and LinkedIn groups, for example, are all potential places where you can learn about social sentiment toward you.



2. Go beyond Facebook and Twitter and monitor the entire social web

Of course, the major social networks are not the only places on the web where people are talking about you. Use a social listening tool to find where people are discussing your brand. Outside of the big boys, look at smaller sites that may not initially live under your radar. Blogs, message boards, and comment sections on industry and trade publication websites are another good place to look for mentions.

3. Create a keyword list that extends your listening reach beyond profile mentions

People won't always mention you by name when talking about you. They may spell your name wrong, use an abbreviation, or simply talk about your industry without specifically calling you out. You need to find this information to better inform your overall listening analysis. Put together a list of words that people may use to describe you, your industry, and your competitors, and track conversation around those keywords across the social web. There may be some noise that you need to filter out, but you'll most likely acquire information that you would not have gotten otherwise.

4. Make listening a company-wide endeavor

Whether you've got an engagement team of one or two dozen, everyone in the company should be on alert for mentions, both positive and negative. If someone within your company comes across someone saying something on the social web, there should be a plan in place so they know to whom they should report it. Create a community alias that allows people to easily send messages. This will not only give you more information, but could also provide additional places for you to track mentions.

5. Develop relationships with influencers in your industry

In every industry, there are those people who have established themselves as influential contributors. They often have large followings on Facebook and Twitter, publish regularly to blogs and speak at conferences. You want to establish relationships with these people for a number of reasons, including: crisis communications, announcement pre-briefing, sentiment persuasion and, of course, listening. Since they are regularly talking to your customers and potential customers, they are in a position to deliver authentic feedback on a regular basis.

6. Create categories to organize mentions

When people discuss your brand on the social web, they'll discuss any number of topics. This will most likely come into your stream in one large, unstructured mess. By assigning categories and manually (or automatically) labeling content into categories, you'll have a far better time reporting and understanding the types of things people are saying about you. Keep your categories flexible to account for any changes you may need to make to your organizational structure.

7. Draft reports to help shape future marketing endeavors

When you're listening to dozens of sources across the social web, you'll likely find yourself sitting on a mountain of data. Creating reports to make sense of it all is the only way that you'll glean insight from what it is really telling you. Put together:

- sentiment analysis
- total mentions
- most active networks
- pain points

and more on a weekly, bi-weekly or monthly basis and present these insights to your larger marketing department to shape current and future campaigns. Others in your organization may be deaf to the way people perceive you in the marketplace, but you hold the key through social listening.

8. Create a crisis management plan before it's too late

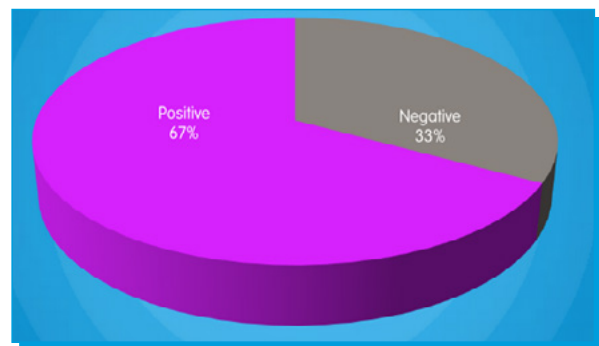
You may understand the importance of a crisis management plan, but have you actually sat down to create one? Part of the difficulty in creating a plan is that it requires a lot of coordination and is not easy to create; planning involves many departments within your organization, including PR, legal, product and any number of executives. Getting everyone in one room to plan for a hypothetical situation can be challenging. But the alternative is a crisis that occurs and no plan to remedy the situation. So put something to paper and be prepared; you may pick up the beginning of a crisis while listening to social channels, and you should be ready to act.

9. Automate what you can, but don't remove the human element

Depending on the size of your company, the social listening process may be overwhelming. Social listening tools can help by automatically tagging certain keywords and assigning mentions to users based on subject matter. These automation steps can improve efficiency and allow you to spend more time engaging with people. But you can't leave it all to computers. Figure out what can and cannot be automated, and allocate human resources where it makes the most sense. You'll be more productive, and your employees will be happier doing work that can't be done by a robot.

10. Sentiment analysis is a mixed bag, so fine tune the results

Sentiment analysis continues to improve over time, but there are some posts that simply won't be properly tagged. Sarcasm, in particular, really trips up sentiment analysis programs, and understandably so. This means that you should always take a sample of your analyzed content whenever conducting sentiment analysis and make sure that it generally looks properly tagged. Depending on sample size, you may want to manually switch over mentions not properly tagged. Doing this for every post defeats the purpose of using a tool, but you want to make sure you feel comfortable releasing the results.



Sentiment Analysis performed by Salesforce Marketing Cloud



Social Media Engagement

Now that you've set up your social listening program to hear what's being said, it's time to join the conversation. Engaging with your community, prospects, customers and detractors is an integral part of a social media strategy. Here are ways to improve your engagement strategy.

11. Create awareness

If you don't have a highly-paid PR team or a big budget marketing plan you can still create strong brand awareness. Social media platforms offer the potential to increase your public profile. Even without purchasing ads, you can still create grassroots campaigns by engaging with influencers in your industry. By sharing content from these influencers, staying active in conversations, and keeping a profile full of worthwhile content, you'll be ready for the time when an influential person shares your content and a flood of new followers head your way.

12. Be mindful of oversharing

While it's important to stay in the loop and maintain social relationships, posting too often, whether it's photos, status updates or frequent Tweets, can turn off your audience. Our own [Melanie Thompson](#) gives some good examples of this in her [post about "over-sharenting."](#) These examples include:

- restraining from posting every time you think of something to say
- creating a calendar for when to post and sticking to it
- thinking about what will provide value down the road

13. Don't always feel compelled to jump in

Some things are better left unsaid. You don't always have to respond every time someone mentions your company. In fact, it's sometimes better to let individual employees, influencers or other members of the community interject before or instead of you. If you jump in at the wrong time, you might send the wrong message. So pick your spots and determine what type of posts you want to respond to and which ones you want to let lie.

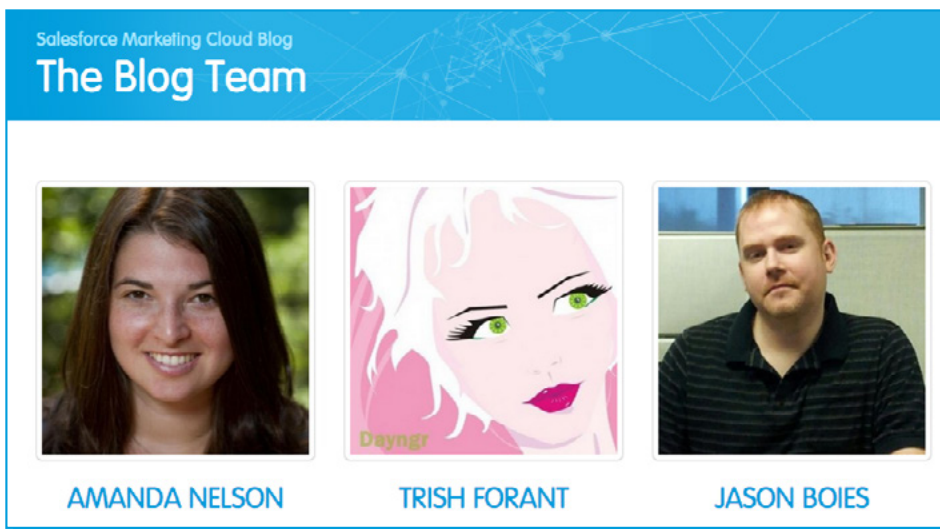
14. Be as transparent as your business allows

It may be tough to convince your execs to share your secret sauce or a beta product with customers. But openness can go a long way in social media. Your community will feel involved in your company and appreciate the trust you put in them. They may become interested in your story, want to get

involved in your product trials and stay in touch when it comes to updates. That hook may be what you need to generate new customers and keep them for the long term.

Here are some ways to be more transparent:

- Take your customers behind the scenes. Do a video walkthrough of the shop floor.
- Livestream your all-hands meeting.
- Introduce your team. Let your customers meet and chat with your employees online.



15. Determine your tone

Showing personality and moving away from corporate-speak is a great way to interact with people on social media. But more importantly than using emoticons and exclamation points is creating a consistent tone. Your followers should know what to expect from you when you speak, but in order to make that happen, you need to establish that internally first.

A great example of personality is the clever comedian and filmmaker, [Mark Malkoff](#), based out of New York City. Mark modestly describes himself as, “Just a wacky guy making videos about my crazy stunts.” However, his resume includes YouTube videos with thousands of views. Mark has tapped into the incredible resource of social media as a way to gain awareness and interest in his creative and bizarre ideas all while showing his true personality.

16. Help your customers become experts in your field

You work in your field and have accumulated a ton of knowledge about a particular subject, so share what you learn with your customers and community. Here are a few approaches:

- You don't have to sound like an expert. "We've started this blog to share what we're learning in our industry. We hope you'll share the journey with us; let us know what questions you're trying to answer, and what's working for you."
- You don't have to answer every question. You can share the questions you're asking and the goals you want to achieve. Then when you answer them, you'll have even more to share.
- Your customers already know you. They like you. They trust you. They're all wondering about your industry, and they would love for you to help them figure it out. And they will thank you for it.

17. Be proactive

Monitor general feeds in your industry; for instance, we at Salesforce Marketing Cloud monitor "social media marketing" to pick up a variety of posts that don't mention our brand but are still valuable. This will reveal new conversations and enable you to establish new relationships. If appropriate, insert yourself into the conversation to stave off any issues before they become too large.

18. Respond to negative AND positive feedback

Three good rules of thumb for responding to positive feedback include:

- *Thank them.* Thank your audience for positive remarks left on your blog post, Twitter feed or Facebook wall.
- *Return the favor.* Is someone sharing your original content on Twitter? Take note of their latest post and share it with your network.
- *Add them as a guest contributor.* Take note of those individuals who really have the voice and passion to contribute something of value that your community will relish.

Three good rules of thumb for responding to negative feedback include:

- *Respond quickly.* Social media users have come to expect a rapid response.
- *Don't delete.* As [Hive Strategies](#) notes on the subject, "Avoid the urge to purge." Your customers may take that as a sign that your brand is uncaring and in social media, disappearing feedback can still be posted elsewhere, which won't reflect well on your brand.
- *Don't feed the trolls.* Stay focused on the constructive criticism. As [John Hall, CEO of Digital Talent Agents](#) stated, "This is a great chance to support your position and gain respect by communicating it respectfully. You never want to leave negative feedback out there that makes a good point."

19. Keep it short

According to the Salesforce report, [Strategies for Effective Tweeting: a Statistical Review](#), “Tweets containing less than 100 characters receive 17% higher engagement than longer tweets.” While Twitter limits your messages with its 140 character limit, Facebook, Google+ and other networks don’t heed the 100 character limit.



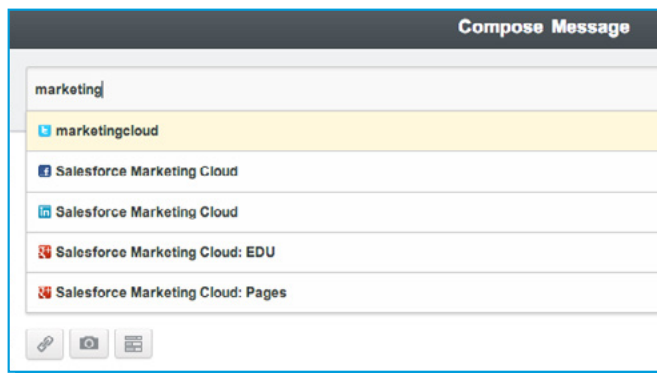
20. Follow your following

Following those that follow you on Twitter is a kind gesture from person-to-person and from person-to-brand. This strategy will help grow your overall following and create goodwill among your community. When you follow back, you might get some public thanks, which will give you added exposure. Think about it: if a large brand on Twitter starts following you, you’d probably get excited and want to know what they’re all about. Get that ball rolling and build an even stronger community.

Social Media Publishing

Though the beauty of social networks is its two-way conversation value between brands and consumers, there is plenty of room for one-way, push communication that comes directly from the brand. But there's a lot to consider before sending a Tweet or posting to Facebook. That's where our publishing best practices can help.

21. Treat each social network as its own entity



Try sharing different content on your social properties. Even if you want to share the same link, image or content, make sure you are using each social network the way it was meant to be used, and to the most of its abilities. Your content doesn't need to all be under 140 characters with a shortened link a la Twitter. Include calls to action; each social network has its own ways in which users can interact with your posts. Use a platform such as [Salesforce Buddy](#)

[Media](#) to schedule and organize your content publishing on multiple channels. Above, you can see how Salesforce Buddy Media allows you to choose from all of your social networks while publishing.

22. Always provide an option to share

One of the most beneficial aspects of social media publishing is the ability for content to spread virally. Viral reach can mean a lot of things; it doesn't have to lead to five million (or billion!) YouTube views. If 20 people with 1,000 followers each Retweet a link you post, you've increased your reach by 20,000. Posting to social networks automatically gives sharing functionality, but your web content might not. So make sure you always give people a way to share to their own networks easily.

23. Set up publishing and approval permissions and processes

From the start, determine who has the ability to publish to social networks, who can create content but not publish, who needs to review, and more. Some social networks like Facebook set up permissions natively for admins, while many require the use of a third-party tool. Regardless of how you do it, map out your approval hierarchy to make sure your organization has proper auditing and fail-safes that ensure the only people who can publish to your networks are those who should have access.

24. Build for mobile

We all know how important mobile is, and how it is increasingly the way in which people access content, for both social and traditional web properties. According to comScore, over [39% of mobile subscribers in the U.S. accessed social networks or blogs from their phones](#). With that knowledge comes the responsibility of building with mobile top-of-mind. Even if you are building a website, make sure the design translates easily to mobile. And any additional capabilities, such as social sharing, should be able to work across mobile, too. The less work people need to do on their phones to access your content, the more willing they'll be to stick with you.

25. Don't forget about nights and weekends

You might work Monday through Friday from 9-5, but your community is global, spanning time zones around the world and checking social networks outside of your normal work hours. Think about all of the times throughout the week when you check Twitter or watch a YouTube video. Including nights and weekends enables you to make your content stand out when many other brands aren't posting. Find a way to schedule content regularly throughout the night and weekend, even if it's a re-post of earlier content, to take advantage of times when people may have longer attention spans.

26. Use your social networks to promote existing content

Distribution is one of the biggest benefits of building a large social network following. You've got a ton of great content that you want to share, so use your social networks to do so. Experiment with different headlines and post types to find what is most effective to maximize traffic. Just be careful not to overdo it. If you are always posting your own content, people may grow tired of your act. [Think about the 10-4-1 rule](#), which is a suggested ratio for social linking of 10 third-party articles, four of your own blog posts and one landing page that requires a form complete to access content.

27. Use your data to determine what works

Everyone can tell you something different when it comes to the best times to publish, the best content, the best post types, and the best calls to action. But only you have the data to make the decision as to what's best for your brand. Do some A/B testing with your publishing strategies, and then assess what has worked best for you after you have collected a large enough sample size. Never stop experimenting, but also develop your own best practices.

28. Set a content calendar that syncs up with other marketing objectives

Your organization may have a few different marketing calendars. There may be an overarching marketing calendar that covers broad marketing campaigns. A content calendar may map out blog

posts and large-scale content objectives. And then you may have a content calendar for social publishing. Make sure these calendars do not exist in vacuums. Your social publishing calendar should reflect other marketing objectives. They don't have to match up exactly; there is always room to do interesting things on social, so just do them. But you don't want to stray too far from the rest of the organization, or you will have a hard time accomplishing your business goals.

29. Implement tracking codes on links

Social attribution is a great way to prove the return on investment for social publishing. We'll talk more about ROI in the measuring section, but in terms of publishing, it can be helpful to post links that have a tracking code built into them. This tracking code will then feed back into an overall database which helps you track what social networks are driving the most traffic. Use this data to guide your posting strategies for big content and marketing campaigns moving forward.

30. Don't be afraid to experiment with different platforms and content

Social media possibilities seem to change daily. Social networks are constantly tinkering with their platforms, and new networks seem to pop up each month. While you should avoid throwing a ton of resources at shiny new objects, don't be afraid to take a chance and find a way to make new platforms work for your business. By doing something creative, you may find yourself garnering media attention for the way you were able to turn a new social network or social network feature into a boost for your business.



Social Media Advertising

Organic and viral reach is great if you can get it, but in an increasingly competitive marketplace for consumers' attention, paid advertising on social media is a critical part of any social media strategy. Here are some tips on how to get started and to get the most for your advertising dollar.

31. Set your advertising goals first

Unlike other forms of social media marketing, paid advertising involves money. This seems obvious, but it means there is more at stake if you aren't getting results; namely, your advertising budget. So before you even get started, think about the reasons you want to advertise on social media, and what you want to get out of it. With clear goals, you'll be able to make better adjustments if things aren't working, and can also better understand success or failure.

32. Create both daily and lifetime budgets for your campaigns

Depending upon which social network you are advertising on, payment works differently. Facebook, for instance, uses a bidding system in which the most competitive bids will earn the right to display ads to users. Setting your budget for both the entire length of a campaign, as well as on a daily basis, will help you decide which ads to run when. It will also allow you to look and will also allow you to look both granularly at your day-to-day requirements, while simultaneously matching it up with your overall spending capabilities.

33. Research the social advertising platforms



Each social network has different advertising capabilities, based on the unique features available to users. Different social networks may be better suited for different social networks, and different advertising units may hold advantages as well. For instance, a video campaign may make sense on YouTube or with Facebook News Feed ads, whereas a link to a new white paper may be best as a link within a promoted Tweet. Regardless of the best type for your campaign, familiarize yourself with your options so that you can make the best decision.

34. Fit your social ad campaigns in the context of other advertising initiatives

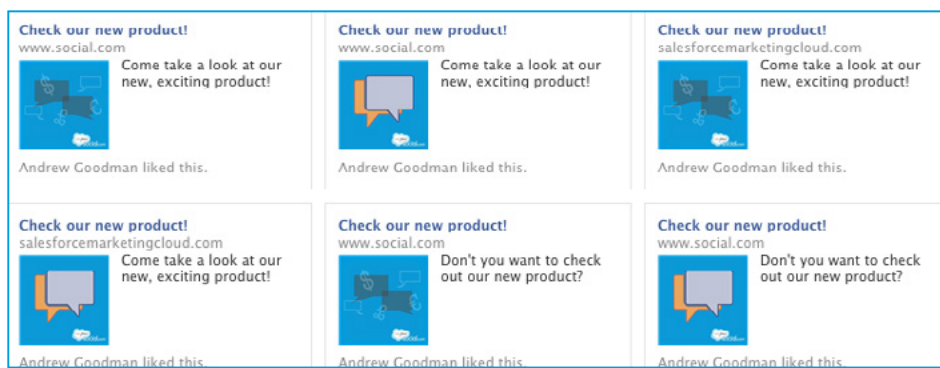
There may be times when you want to run social media ads separate from other marketing initiatives, and that's fine. But most likely, your social media ads will coincide with other paid media initiatives. In order to create cohesion, make sure your creative, messaging and targeting coincides with the rest of your traditional advertising. This may seem obvious, but different departments or different media-buying agencies may lead different advertising aspects, so it's important to get everyone in the same room to share plans and assets.

35. Match available targeting options with your advertising objectives

Part of the allure of social media advertising is the available options when it comes to targeting. Putting your content in front of the right people has never been easier (or more accurate) than it is on social networks. But before you get started, consider what you want to accomplish with your targeting options. Do you want to target people who already show an affinity toward you? Would you prefer to attract new customers? Are you looking for a certain demographic? Or maybe you are running a promotion in a certain city and want to look to people in that area. All of these options, and more, are possible with social media advertising.

36. Test, test, test

Companies that focus on advanced targeting of their social ads also use A/B testing as a means to improve their results. The best way to determine the success of something is to have two small test groups and show them different versions of the same promoted content. The one that performs better is the one that is used on the balance of the list. Make sure the variable is limited to one element, like the headline, image or call to action, but not all three. You can create your groups by targeting, but you need to make sure you have a big enough audience to make the time and effort worthwhile. It's possible to get too granular when it comes to targeting, at which point you are severely undercutting your ad's effectiveness by limiting the number of people who are seeing it.



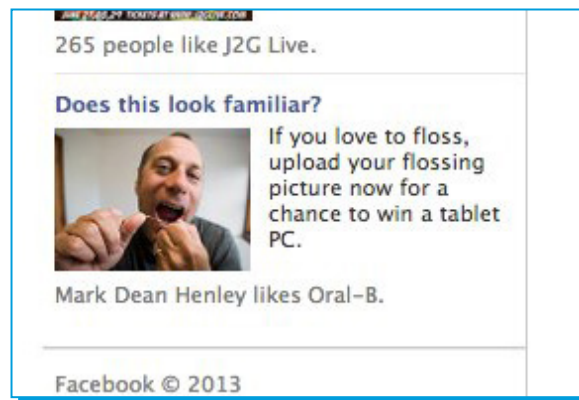
Test different creative possibilities to see what works best, including various titles, links, body text and images.

37. Automate wherever possible

Marketers have become comfortable with automated algorithms running many types of online ads, for example pay-per-click and Google banner ads. The next stage for companies using social ads is to use a platform that makes optimization decisions based on performance. If a sponsored story gets a lot of engagement and clicks, the budget can be increased automatically. An under-performing ad can be turned off the same way. No one has to worry about a campaign going out of control in the middle of the night. In addition to showing the right ads at the right time to the right people, automated social ads provide better data and analytics, so marketers can gain more actionable insights from their campaigns. And this ultimately improves performance of the social ads.

38. Don't forget about time of day and scheduling

Just as it's important not to forget about nights and weekends when publishing, timing can be everything when it comes to social ad effectiveness. This will most likely require some testing to figure out when your ads are most effective; however, there are some use cases that could be intuitive from the start. For instance, if you are a fast-food chain or a sandwich shop, you may want to run ads for an hour before lunch and dinner, when people are thinking of what to eat. Look at the times and days on which people are most engaged with your ad, and devote more of your budget to those times once you feel that your sample size is large enough to do so.



Oral-B posted an add flaunting a flossing contest at night when people are likely to floss.

39. Determine the metrics that will best represent your campaign status

Social media ads give you a wealth of information when it comes to result data. Because social networks can track so many different actions taken by users, they often spit out spreadsheets full of data that you'll need to sift through to determine the effectiveness of your advertising campaign. Create a list of metrics that are most important to you before you get started so that you can monitor them most closely; this will tie in to the advertising goal that you set before you get started. As your campaign progresses, either make changes to optimize the results of these metrics, or determine whether these metrics are actually the best indicators of your success.

40. Set regular meetings to analyze metrics

Advertising campaigns are living, breathing processes that require constant monitoring and fine-tuning. But the only way to know what needs to be changed, if anything, is to look at the results on a regular basis. Schedule a regular meeting with the necessary stakeholders to go over the performance of your campaign. Even if things are going according to plan (and let's face it, this rarely happens in marketing), it's good to have everyone on the same page. This will also make sharing successes internally a lot easier, since those involved will have regular updates on how well the campaign is performing.



Social Media Measurement

Put into place the right technology, people and processes to ensure that you always know how your endeavors are performing. Social media measurement allows you to make decisions regarding fixes or tweaks midway through a campaign.

41. Align your objectives with your metrics

For measurement to be effective, it has to align directly with the measurable objectives you've set. Those objectives should follow the SMART methodology, first introduced by [Peter Drucker](#) in his 1954 book, [The Practice of Management](#). The acronym stands for your goals being Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic, and Timed.

- **Specific:** Describe your objectives specific to the results you want. Go deeper than “increase brand awareness” to “increase brand awareness by 10% in the next six months via a targeted social media campaign.”
- **Measurable:** You want to use these metrics in the review process to see if you were effective. Having a specific objective will clearly show whether results were met.
- **Achievable:** Often “100% customer satisfaction” isn't realistic. Your goal of 90% customer satisfaction may be more plausible so consider what's feasible when setting your objectives.
- **Realistic:** Ensure you have the resources, tools and staffing to meet your objectives, or you'll just frustrate yourself.
- **Timed:** Get specific with your objectives and incorporate a time frame. This makes them real and tangible.

42. Pick a goal

As the great Zig Ziglar said, “If you aim at nothing, you'll hit it every time.”

Good social media goals are usually in line with the greater goals of your organization. Here are some popular ones:

- Increase awareness
- Generate leads
- Convert leads to sales

- Retain existing customers
- Reduce costs

Pick a goal. If you have the resources and the time, you may pick all of these goals. However, it's much better to execute well on one of these goals than to dilute your efforts.

43. Segment and trend

You'll know when you've segmented your KPIs enough when you say, "Ah ha! Now that's something actionable!"

Until then, keep slicing and dicing. For example, if you're trying to figure out if your new Facebook efforts are driving awareness you might look at:

- New visitors from Facebook
- New visitors from Facebook with more than three pageviews
- New visitors from Facebook that engaged with premium content

Lastly, you'll want to look at how these KPIs trend over time. For instance, did your recent Twitter ad buy increase your awareness metrics over the prior month?

44. Track and measure social media leads and purchases

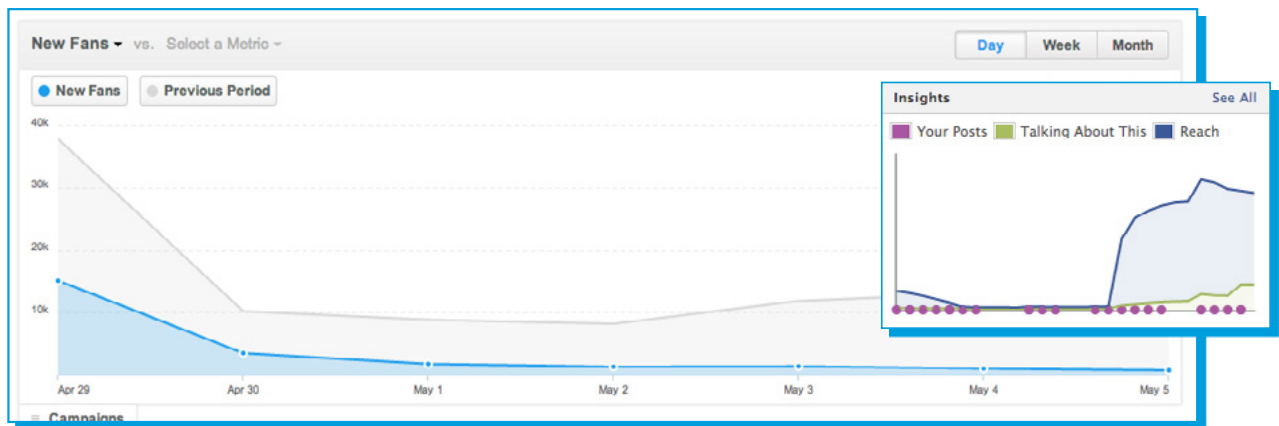
You can track revenue in different ways, depending on your business model. For B2B companies, you may label a lead as a person who has downloaded an ebook and completed a form in exchange for content. With a B2C company, you may track users who have perused or purchased on your ecommerce website, or someone who signed up for your company newsletter, and label them customers. Regardless of what you call it, make sure you can properly attribute leads and revenue that comes from social media. Tracking codes within links sent out through social media are a good way to capture this information. This data will help shape future social media initiatives.

45. Measure cost savings

Sometimes, the value in a business endeavor isn't about what goes up – like revenue – but what comes down, like costs. Social media can have some very clear efficiencies, most notably on the customer service side, but also in areas like training or communications. In particular, this is great for tracking savings that come from using social media for customer service. In cutting down on call center volume by answering customer inquiries on platforms like Twitter, not only are you making people happier, but you are also freeing up customer service reps to handle more complex issues over the phone.

46. Create a central dashboard to bring in disparate metrics

One of the big problems with measuring social media campaigns is that data is all over the place. You may have some data directly from social networks, some from third-party tools and other data from internal analytics teams. This can make assessing a campaign incredibly frustrating. Using whatever technology you deem most effective (Excel, for instance, can work), compile all of this data into one central dashboard for easy viewing. You can use numbers, charts, graphs, etc., but putting everything in one place can ensure you aren't missing anything while removing redundancies and superfluous information. It all makes presenting data at a meeting a whole lot easier.



Your metrics may come from a number of different sources. Facebook Insights may provide one set of metrics to you, while third-party tools such as Salesforce Buddy Media provide other metrics in a separate location.

47. Determine how you'll define ROI

ROI is and will, for quite some time, be the magic three letters in social media marketing. Everyone wants an answer to the question, "how do I track ROI on my social media efforts?" Many are understandably frustrated when there is no single answer to this question. But just like most traditional advertising strategies, measuring the impact from marketing campaigns is always tough. Social media gives more information than your other marketing efforts, but you have to know what to do with it. Even if you aren't driving directly to a commerce page, it's important to decide what series of actions a user could take that eventually would lead to a sale. Once you have that, you can figure out how to track that before your campaign gets underway. It's a lot easier to put your ROI-tracking in place first rather than later trying to figure out how to define it.

48. Be prepared to pivot on everything

With social media, the beauty is the flexibility; if you suddenly want to change the direction of a campaign, it requires very little time and effort. That's why regularly meeting with those who have a hand in your social media campaigns to go over metrics is critical for your success. These meetings may lead to a change in a direction, tone, or even the actual metrics you are using to define success.

Constantly assessing whether you are looking at the right data is as important to your success as looking at the success of your content.

49. Clichéd metrics are great, but they aren't for everyone

We've all heard the usual suspects when it comes to social media data:

- likes
- shares
- comments
- Retweets
- click-through rate
- conversions

These can be great and useful pieces of information based on your campaign goals. But don't feel compelled to look at these metrics just because "everyone else is doing it." In fact, it's possible that the best metrics for you are not ones that are presented in spreadsheets by the networks themselves or third-party tools. Do what you need to do to get the most out of the available data, and don't feel the need to limit yourself to the popular crowd of social media metrics.

50. Use every available measurement tool

Using all of your available resources to calculate and put data into context is the best way to track your successes. Whether that means using pre-populated spreadsheets from third party tools, looking at social network analytics sections, or even whipping out a calculator and crunching numbers the old-school way, don't skimp out on measuring your data. It's the only way to know whether you are on the right path with your social media efforts, and can greatly impact the way you operate moving forward.





Conclusion

This list of 50 social media best practices is here to help enhance your existing strategy. Try one or two of the suggestions from each section, run your tests to see whether they work, and then hold onto or move away from each best practice. We hope this list gets you thinking differently about the ways you approach your social media efforts.

And if you've got your own best practices that work for you, we'd love to hear about them. Get in touch with us through the channels below and share your list!



Have questions? Contact us:

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-  [@marketingcloud](https://twitter.com/marketingcloud)
-  1-888-672-3426

Group1

Building brand awareness

by **Group member 1** - Thursday, 18 April 2013, 07:08 PM

Hi!

Here some of my thoughts on the trigger:

I would say that this company could contact directly the firms within the industry.

They could even try to get PR – surely there is some kind of industry release they could be introduced in.

If they have created a ground breaking technology that should become the standard of the industry, I wonder if they have already patented their innovation.

I think it is good that the web site is managed externally; however the story doesn't tell, if the site has been made by professionals; it should, in order to give a good impression of the company.

While surfing I found an article “5 Tips for Building Brand Awareness Through Social Media” in <http://www.4psmarketing.com/blog/5-tips-for-building-brand-awareness-through-social-media/>

It discusses how marketers can use social media for building brand awareness.

1. Better Content: Company should have interesting stories to tell in order to increase the reach of its brand. The more interesting the stories are the more people are keen on sharing them. Having new water filtration product should be interesting enough among the industry.

2. Digital PR /Community Outreach: PR is crucial when building brand awareness. As this water filtration company has such an innovation as a product, it should not be a problem to get it and trying to draw the traffic to their own website.

3. Influencer Relationships: Knowing who are the influencers in the industry and creating relationship with them. Why not even let them try the product in order to see the difference compared to other similar products.

4. Incentivised Engagement: Rewarding people for engaging with the brand can be successful; creating competitions etc. where people are willing to give their contact details and even share the competition to others for the brand to get more contacts for something given away to the people in return raises brand awareness. This action

might need some modification in order to work for the water filtration company in our trigger.

5. Facebook Advertising: Reasonably priced ads which can be targeted to correct audience in terms of geography and interest. Not sure also if this might work for industrial water filtration product, though.

I think the problem might be how to build brand awareness.

Learning objective could be building brand awareness through social media.

BR,S

Re: Building brand awareness

by **Group member 2** - Friday, 19 April 2013, 12:59 AM

Hello Ladies,

Thank you S for opening this trigger. I was not sure if we finished the other one yet. However, as a DL for this trigger I am more than happy to move forward.

So what do we have here?

I am sure that the company has patented their technology. For the sake of this discussion let's assume that they have.

S, pointed out a very important thing here about the website of the company. In these modern times, the website of a company is one of the most important business cards that a business can have. The way the website is created can attract a lot of traffic and eventually can get business.

Regarding social media, I agree with S that it can be an amazing tool for this company. However, we have to consider that this company has a unique product that appeals to a specific target group. This means that certain aspects of social media might not be appealing or rewarding. As social media is not yet settled, companies and marketers are still experimenting with it. There are no "stone written" rules. Well maybe one: Be honest.

In my opinion, Facebook advertising could be a good tool for B2C business. B2B advertising is more likely to be used in LinkedIn and maybe Google+. In all these cases it is not yet sure how advertising on these platforms pay off. A good example is this interview with Heia Heia CEO:

<http://www.arcticstartup.com/2013/03/01/jussi-raisanen-shares-what-heiaheia-has-learned-about-online-marketing>

The article as it will give you an idea about the effectiveness of advertising in social media. It is good but not for all.

In another interesting article, it is interesting to see an info-graphic on how Finnish start-ups view media advertising in general. An interesting fact is that most of the companies put an emphasis on the website and other tools such as blogs. With blogs you generate content and attract traffic. This can lead to sales.

<http://www.arcticstartup.com/2013/03/11/how-finnish-startups-view-media-advertising-infographic>

Here is another survey, this time in America, where the results show that small businesses use more and more social platforms for their marketing.

<http://www.marketingprofs.com/charts/2013/10411/small-business-marketing-linkedin-twitter-growing-in-effectiveness?adref=nlt032813>

All of the articles above have great visuals to support their findings.

Now last article in this post looks at a social media strategy for B2B. The most important thing in this article is a case study about a technology company similar to our case.

<http://www.marketingprofs.com/articles/2013/10293/b2b-grow-up-and-get-a-social-media-strategy-will-you?adref=nlt031213>

I am sure that after reading this article you will see the similarities. The mini case in this article comes even with a social media strategy that could also work for our case.

About the learning objectives i agree with S about brand awareness through social media. However i would add digital marketing tools and cost effective digital marketing/tools.

Blogging, email marketing and company website are very effective tools to create awareness. On top of these tools we have also YouTube, which is a subject in itself and we can add it in the final discussion.

I will not have access to PC over the weekend. Therefore this long post... again in the middle of the night....hope i got it right....

Looking forward to your input and to our conversation about this trigger.

Have a great weekend.

C

Re: Building brand awareness

by **Group member 3** - Friday, 19 April 2013, 06:23 PM

Hello everyone, here we go again. Have you noticed, Leading by Branding never sleeps!

Interesting trigger again, and I'm happy that it addresses more b2b-world this time. Considering the trigger, I would start looking a way out into people's minds via blogging and content marketing. I have found that content marketing can be very effective way to build brand awareness in b2b markets. It also provides added value if targeted right.

The company in the trigger has a LinkedIn account. For the past one year LinkedIn has started to position itself into more informal business networking platform. It has launched features that have some "entertaining" value, in addition than just cold CV facts, such as endorsement functionality. And companies, in Finland as well, have started to post blog-like posts in the forums. I believe LinkedIn will grow its visibility and its users start to follow it more often if the activity level and updates remain interesting. This is a hard medium to raise awareness, but if planned right you can reach just the right target groups.

I like the learning objective S suggested.

BR, E

Re: Building brand awareness

by **Group member 4** - Saturday, 20 April 2013, 02:53 PM

Hi guys,

Very interesting trigger and very close to a friend in this school.. as C also knows! Ville H with his team has been doing this work in Sofi Filtration, which is, indeed, a water filtration technology company.

I think you all had good points about some, which must be well targeted in this kind of business. B-to-B-business is very delicate and needs a right target audience, as you already mentioned. S's link with the 5 point-list was effective, I especially liked the influencer relationship to go with this kind of business. I think the company will need a lot of relationships in their own field to reach out their supporters and then their customers.

Sofi-Filtration has got a nice publicity through FinPro (check this link

<http://www.finpro.fi/sofi-filtration>) and I think these kinds of forums that proceed Finnish businesses are worth checking and networking.

I will also try to find something for this through Philip Kotler and Waldemar Pfoertsch and their B2B Brand Management book, because they might have something for this case there. I'll get back to it later.

LinkedIn was a good choice, too, because there are nowadays so many different professionals.

I like the learning objective, but it could also be only Building Brand Awareness, because social media might not be the only solution here? Also b-to-b-business brand building might suite here?

Have a great, sunny weekend! /H

Re: Building brand awareness

by **Group member 2** - Tuesday, 23 April 2013, 01:07 AM

Hello Ladies,

As far as I can see we have the following learning objectives: brand awareness through social media, brand awareness, and B2B brand building.

The first learning objective, brand awareness through social media could include also the brand awareness in general.

Looking at the trigger again (Considering the small, almost non-existent budget, the brand manager is looking to find new ways to complete his task) I feel that maybe we should look into some of the tools available that could be used cost effectively for this case.

The learning objective that H suggested could sound something like: Building a B2B brand online. This would suit our trigger as there are quite many tools for online B2B branding that are cost effective.

Therefore in the end i would like to propose the following learning objectives: Brand Awareness through Social Media and Building a B2B Brand Online.

If you have any other suggestions please add them here as soon as possible.

J! We could use your input too as soon as possible.

If i do not hear anything from you in the next two days i will move the discussion to the closing forum with the above learning objectives.

Thank you all for your great ideas.
All the best and have a good night.
C

Re: Building brand awareness
by **Group member 1**- Tuesday, 23 April 2013, 09:24 PM

Hi!
Learning objectives sound good; nice to have the specific B2B aspect there.
BR,
S

Re: Building brand awareness
by **Teacher** - Wednesday, 24 April 2013, 03:39 PM

I agree. Impressive work in your opening process. All the best to your closing!
Kind regards
M

Re: Building brand awareness
by **Group member 5**- Thursday, 25 April 2013, 02:05 PM

I'm so sorry. Been away for awhile.
I have nothing to add. I agree with the learning objectives and I agree with E about blogging and also the LinkedIN as a channel to reach B2B contacts.
I'll get more into this in the Closing Discussion.
Short timeframe for discussion

by **Group member 1** - Friday, 26 April 2013, 09:58 PM

Hi!
I noticed that this trigger is very short, as the last date for closing discussion is already next Monday.
Shall we start the action?
BR,
S

Re: Short timeframe for discussion

by **Group member 2** - Friday, 26 April 2013, 11:18 PM

Hi,

Thank you S for reminding us about the deadline. I did not see that coming. This is not the best news ever but i am sure we can make the best out of it. I will send M an email to extend the trigger a few days. It is very difficult to get a constructive and fruitful discussion by Monday.... I am not even home this weekend. Traveling Luckily took my laptop with me... Let's see with what we can come up in one weekend and lets hope M gives us a few more days.

In the meantime here is something i found about about small business marketing. The article: <http://www.marketingprofs.com/charts/2013/10288/small-business-marketing-top-tools-for-finding-and-keeping-customers?adref=nlt031213>

looks at a survey among small businesses about the digital marketing tools that they use and their effectiveness. According to the article, even though it is not industry specific (our trigger) we can see that the website (as a tool) and the video (as a tool) are the most effective digital marketing tools. Social media and blogs are almost equally important. This shows, at least to me, that the importance of those tools cannot be enough overstated.

Here is an interesting presentation from Dell on how they see Social media and its potential:

Powering the Possible through Social Media

by Dell Social Media on Feb 22, 2013

<http://www.slideshare.net/dellsocialmedia/powering-the-possible-through-social-media#text-version>

Last but not least for this post i leave you with an interesting article about Digital Marketing In 2013: Predictions From 86 Industry Luminaries

http://www.cmo.com/articles/2012/12/17/digital_marketing_in.html

The commonality among those 86 people who make predictions is that digital marketing and digital marketing tools are indispensable for any company who takes business serious.

Have a great weekend,

C

Re: Short timeframe for discussion

by **Group member 1** - Saturday, 27 April 2013, 12:26 AM

Hello ladies,

Digital marketing and in particular this trigger are very close to me...Therefore, I have gathered a collection of articles on the matter that can help us shed some light on this. In my opinion, digital marketing is fairly new (10-15 years) and with the explosion of social media and video, companies are trying whatever it works to get the customer. However a few rules that work have emerged.

This time line gives us an overview on the evolution of digital advertizing/marketing:

<http://mashable.com/2012/09/25/the-evolution-of-digital-advertising-infographic/>

The following article: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media-network/media-network-blog/2013/mar/06/digital-marketing-basics>

, gives a few basic steps that our company can take to create an effective digital presence.

Brand identification and consistency.

Sounds familiar??? What is the story you are telling your customers? Understanding what your brand stands for is the North Star that should guide all your online activities, according to Matthew Childs, senior vice-president at GSD&M advertising agency.

Search marketing

Around 89% of consumers use a search engine to find information on products or services before buying, according to a recent report from Fleishman-Hillard.

Content optimization

Original and consistent content is the key to attract more customers according to Guy Martin Smalley, Founder of Bowery Creative in British Columbia, Canada.

Social media outreach

Social media helps create awareness about your products and services. In our case LinkedIn would be the best bet. Joining industry specific groups and generating content can lead to an increased awareness and website traffic.

Sales leads and conversion

All the efforts put in digital marketing should end up in sales leads and conversion.

Here is an interesting video where Mckinsey company is trying to make sense of social media:

http://www.mckinsey.com/features/social_media.

Keywords for the previous post: digital marketing tools, social media

Keywords for this post: digital marketing, social media

Have a good night.

c

Re: Short timeframe for discussion

by **Teacher** - Saturday, 27 April 2013, 09:07 AM

I originally thought you could finish before Vappu and enjoy the holidays, but I don't mind if you, as a group, agree to extend the deadline a bit - as long as each group member is fine with it.

All the best to your studies and hauskaa vappua!

M

Re: Short timeframe for discussion

by **Group member 2** - Saturday, 27 April 2013, 11:31 AM

Hi M

Thank M you for this extension.

What does the group think? Should we extend this discussion by 30.04 or 1.5? Or we just keep the original deadline?

Any suggestions are appreciated.

Have a good weekend.

C

Re: Short timeframe for discussion

by **Group member 1** - Saturday, 27 April 2013, 09:55 PM

Hi!

Ok, we can extend, shall we say then 1.5.? What do others think?

Considering the trigger: Again I found a list of tips related to the topic... These are almost becoming my trademark ;)

So, here's an article about 5 Tips for Better B2B Branding:

<http://www.toprankblog.com/2010/03/b2b-branding-tips/>

1. Consistently produce useful, innovative content

It is so easy to put up a Twitter account, Facebook page, YouTube channel etc. in Social Media. Considering the water filtration company, they could tell about their product, company and so on for example by:

- Creating videos of water filtration product (what is it, how does it work...) and promoting them on company website and YouTube
- Using a company blog in web site or/and in LinkedIn to tell company news and product specialty. Like E mentioned, LinkedIn is becoming more popular. Maybe one day it is as popular among business as Facebook is among consumers...

2. Network digitally and in person

Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn or another social media are all about communicating with the customers. This applies also to b2b business.

- Social media is not just about trying to sell your products, it is engaging in conversations
- It's about targeting your audience, not masses
- It's about listening and hearing, and only after that selling and talking

Not to forget in person networking; whenever it would a suitable industry event, like the fairs they already are participating to, the water filtration company should be there.

3. Get personal and be real

Humanizing the company for customers is as important in B2B branding as it is in B2C branding. In B2C it is easy to personalize the brand e.g. with spokesperson. If thinking of our water filtration company, maybe the personalization could be done through educational/training character who would educate the industry about this new technology. This would give a face for the company.

4. Position yourself differently than others in the space

Positioning the company differently compared to competitors should be easy, as the water filtration company has the unique technique that should become standard of the industry! Well differentiated from others.

5. Leverage proof points

Branding efforts should be followed and good results celebrated. Setting proof points helps to follow the performance analytically (website traffic, retweets, blog followers) and subjectively (mentions on blogs, media interviews). All these points help the company to see where they are standing at in terms of marketing communications compared to their competitors.

Keywords: B2B branding

BR,

S

Re: Short timeframe for discussion

by **Group member 1** - Saturday, 27 April 2013, 10:36 PM

Hello ladies,

Great stuff S I especially like the third point: Get personal and be real. This cannot be enough overstated. People are fed up with bullshit so being real is the winner.

I am also for the 1.5 as a deadline but lets see what the other say...

Digging for material for this trigger i came across 2 interesting articles that might help our little company.

The first article looks; Branding Your Business Through Social Media - 3 Keys to Getting Started, gives 3 simple suggestions for starting with branding through social media. The article puts it very bluntly: that "company brands need to communicate, to "network" and to reach out beyond their normal comfort zone".

Companies need to first decide what they would like to achieve with social media.

Then identify the social media that suits best to reach the established goals. Last but not least, engagement and interaction is required for a successful branding action.

My question as a digital marketing manager would not be should we go with social media or not. My question would be: which platform would suit me best and how social would benefit my business best?

1. Fish where the fish are

For business to business brands, "LinkedIn can provide fertile ground". Google Plus has become increasingly a tool for B2B. Furthermore, videos on YouTube can boost the company's visibility online.

2. Establish a consistent brand voice

"Discuss internally which type of brand voice fits your organization best and develop your unique groove." Whatever the company decides the most important factor here is consistency. If the company misses out on consistency, the whole digital effort will be for nothing as your audience will go somewhere else to find consistency and great content.

3. Go for quality not quantity

Too much social media activity might give the wrong message. If you interact too much and do not say anything you will lose your credibility.

"Your business brand is not just your name and logo -- it's the actions you take, the words you speak and the tone you set that determines how people feel about your company."

Deciding to move from traditional marketing to digital and implicit to social media can be a challenging task and scary at the same time for any company.

Article link: <http://socialmediatoday.com/tungstenbranding/603576/branding-your-business-through-social-media-3-keys-getting-started>

The second article is more like a digital marketing plan that could suit our trigger. As you can see from the plan there are a few steps that a company could take to develop a digital concept. Moreover the steps can be seen as a checklist based on what one wants to achieve with their actions. The plan is simple and pretty comprehensive.

Article link: <http://orgnot.com/digital-marketing-plan-info/>

I will leave you with a short video that gives a glimpse of the potential of social media (it looks more like advertising in the end but still ok) :

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgp7GwHxV14&playnext=1&list=PL8A2CCCEFD44DDC66&feature=results_main

Keywords: Social media branding, digital marketing plan.

Have a great weekend.

C

PS: Do not forget to give your thought on extending the trigger deadline. Thank you.

Re: Short timeframe for discussion

by **Group member 3** - Sunday, 28 April 2013, 11:34 AM

Hi

Extended DL until May 1st is fine by me.

As already mentioned in C's and S's posts, video content on company web sites and blogs, etc., is increasing. One Finnish web designer told me, that according to a research, the first thing that awakes people's interest on a web site is video content that is positioned on the front page.

I don't have further details on that study, but it is easy to believe that video is effective way to deliver your message and to get attention. According to Frederic Gonzalo's writing, hot social media trends in 2013 are blogs, videos and podcasts. You can check it here <http://www.business2community.com/social-media/hot-social-media-trends-in-2013-blogs-podcasts-videos-0471321>

According to John Morgan in The Brand Against the Machine book, video has high perceived value, allowing the audience to get closer to you and to get to know you better when seeing you in "person". I think this links closely to the Brand storytelling.

The best part about a video is that, the content can be made very visual and the message fast acquired. The video can also easily be linked almost where ever you want, on YouTube or some other video platform, on the company web site, blog, FaceBook, LinkedIn, you name it. It can be funny, informative, entertaining...

Here's a 60 second video from IBM - one of the best b2b content marketers - advertising its Social Business solutions by sharing a customer reference story

http://m.youtube.com/watch?v=0vB4_NpI4C4

BR, E

Re: Short timeframe for discussion

by **Group member 1** - Sunday, 28 April 2013, 10:36 PM

Hello!

According to Guerilla Social Media Marketing –book by Levinson&Gibson, to succeed in social media, brands need to be :

Easy to understand: What do you do? Try answering it in 140 digits, i.e. the length of a Twitter post. Leave out the confusing jargon and tell the most obvious benefits of your brand to your target audience. With a short business description you can make it sure the brand is easy to understand.

Distinct: The brand, benefits and message have to be different from competitors. The idea is to follow your competition and make everything bigger and better than them. For example, if competitors do blog posts once a week, you should make them 3 times a week. Pay attention also to the time they are doing their posts and be distinctive. If they make well produced videos, create your own style to make them e.g. more per-

sonal and home-made. You should know all social media platforms and learn to use them 100%. This way you have more weapons to use against your competitors.

Easy to share: Whatever you post online, it should be easy to share. Add the Facebook/Twitter etc. buttons for your audience to be able to share your information with one click. This way you will utilize the viral marketing possibilities and people do not need to have big efforts on sharing. When adding photos, make several resolutions available – this helps press to get suitable photo for making a story about your brand straight away, not wasting time asking for the photo from you.

Easy to find: Make sure your contact information is always visible, despite the social media. Remember to give phone number, too, for a quick contacting. Use search engine optimization (buy key words) to appear to your target audience.

Always on: Be always prepared to have something new to tell in social media. Have your smartphone available whenever, for example you might get good videos of trying the product with new customer that can be shared with others online. With smartphone it is also easy to update information from fairs and events – we are now here, where are you?

Human: Having more personal, real authentic conversations. Listen your customers, make them feel heard.

Consistent: All social media activities need to be consistent. Think of coloring, fonts, the information shared... Do not forget that when meeting your customers, your office, business card, your staff etc. need to be consistent, too, and match to the image you have given online.

There are few similarities to what you've already posted, C. E.g. being consistent and human. I feel the things above make a good base to begin with social media marketing and building brand awareness online. There are some detailed tips but if you are a small company every detail counts!

Sorry about quite long post, but it was so interesting I got carried away!

key word: social media marketing

BR,

S

Re: Short timeframe for discussion

by **Group member 3** - Monday, 29 April 2013, 07:30 AM

S, I like your example! Very clear guidelines, short and simple. If following those steps, b2b posting in social media shouldn't be too hard for anyone!

BR, E

Re: Short timeframe for discussion

by **Group member 5** - Monday, 29 April 2013, 10:01 AM

Hello!

May 1st is fine also by me. I'll get back to this trigger later today.

Re: Short timeframe for discussion

by **Group member 4** - Monday, 29 April 2013, 07:31 PM

Hi everyone,

extension is ok for me too, I'll also continue later! /H

Re: Short timeframe for discussion

by **Group member 3** - Monday, 29 April 2013, 09:15 PM

Hi

I read today a nice blog post via LinkedIn, in which Dave Kerpen tells how to write more successful blog posts. A bit off from the actual topic, but I think this gives new perspective to the corporate blogging as well. It can be done easily and effectively - at least on a paper...

The most important, the content is king. But besides that he gives a few, nice and easy, tips to follow when writing a blog.

As we all know, headline is important. We are bombarded daily with loads of mail and posts, some of them are important, some interesting and some are just plain spam. The headline helps us to choose what we read and in what order we read (even those important mails). Headline should give the readers a clue what to expect, and for example action verbs and questions are good ways to draw the readers interest.

Pictures work always. It doesn't have to be a picture of a cat - even the cats rule the internet. It can be any kind of a visual effect, e.g. a graph of infographics.

Bullet points

- Attract the reader's attention

- Make easier to reference key point
- Make data simple and easy to understand

When blogging, one of the aims often is, to get people share your post to their networks. So, (as mentioned in S's post as well) you have to think how people will re-tweet, like or share your thoughts. What is important to them, what is something they want to pass on to their networks, what will make them look good? You should also try to engage your readers with questions or by provocation, so they will comment your post and will most likely follow you later on as well.

And as said already in the beginning, interesting content, written simply enough is nice to read and is the best way to attract readers.

Here's a link to the post in LinkedIn.

http://www.linkedin.com/today/post/article/20130429113637-15077789-how-to-write-more-successful-blog-posts?goback=%2Eptf_*1_*1_*1_*1_recentPosts_*1&trk=who_to_follow-b

BR, E

Re: Short timeframe for discussion

by **Group member 5**- Monday, 29 April 2013, 10:06 PM

Good evening!

I do agree with all of you that the content is the king – especially it is super crucial with new businesses where nobody really knows anything about the brand. Blogging is a good way to share your thoughts, but I do believe still that a picture tells more than thousand words. This is why I'm in love with Pinterest.

I found a blog post from Mashable written by Lauren Indvik (28th April, 2013), who brings a new concept called “P-Commerce” in the air. The real name is in its first meaning: Participatory Commerce. Participatory Commerce is basically a sales model where consumers can bring their thoughts to the design and different variation suggestions of products that they buy. In this post NikeID was used as an example of P-Commerce.

Its second meaning is Pinterest Commerce. I think it is very interesting that not any company has bought Pinterest yet. They don't know how to make money with it, but still at the same time some retailers have discovered that visitors from Pinterest are

more likely to buy and spend more money than visitors coming from other social networks like Facebook and Twitter. Isn't this weird? So guys, if you have any good ideas – should we buy Pinterest? ;)

In our trigger I feel that the Brand Manager could think of a social media strategy to use these free channels and share some quality content with some kind of a hook.

The source can be read from here:

<http://mashable.com/2013/04/28/p-commerce-definition/>

Keywords: P-Commerce, Pinterest, free channel

Re: Short timeframe for discussion

by **Group member 2** - Tuesday, 30 April 2013, 12:00 AM

Hello Ladies,

@ S: Great post. I especially like the Human and Consistent points. Have to be a bit critical to the always on point as it is very much industry dependent and also goal dependent. In our case it would be a challenging to be always on with now and interesting content especially that the business is addressed to large mining companies. If the company would do B2C business with portable/fixed water filters, then I could see a need of being always on. However the Always ON is a good point for being active on social media.

@ E: Great stuff. I like the idea of making data simple and easy to understand. Furthermore, getting people to share our content is done just by having simple and interesting content that others might want to spread around.

@ J: Cool stuff. Pinterest is indeed something to keep our eyes on. It is growing at an alarming rate. I am sure it will be bought soon and I bet Google will want to get its hands on it to leverage the competition with Facebook. As for our case and brand manager, i totally agree with you that a social media strategy is needed. For the social media to work at its full potential the brand manager has to make sure the basics of digital marketing are in place and running (website/blog/videos/Social accounts).

@H: Where are you?

Great job everyone.

Have a great Vappu. C

Re: Short timeframe for discussion

by **Group member 4** - Tuesday, 30 April 2013, 11:35 AM

Hello again,

and sorry for the delay!

Philip Kotler and Waldemar Pfoertsch tell in their B2B Brand Management book about Tata Steel from India, which was ranked world's best steel company in 2001 and 2005. They focused on improving their image by attracting, developing and retaining their human resources. They tried to create growth, flexible decision making processes and accountability AND they also pursued rewarding system which was linked with performance and self development opportunities for all the employees (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006).

Even though these kind of products are strongly dependent on market fluctuations, Tata Steel tried to avoid its dependence on external environment by adopting a strategy of branding its products and moving to high value added products. They also realized that they need to focus on the customer to be able to do the change, so they launched programs with customer-based headlines. They also created several different programs for improving customer satisfaction like faster order fulfilment through computerizing and improving interaction with the customers.

Then, along with the high value added products launch, they launched their first branded product. They created new images and associations of their services through different product brands. They gathered that this would help them cope also through business downturns (keep the sales stabilized) and also able them price accordingly. They used basically print ads and outdoor advertising in communication, but also some tv-campaigns and community welfare programs. Even though around 60 % of Tata Steel's products are sold through contracts, and their prices are protected from price fluctuations, the rest of the products are what makes the extra revenue and which need branding. They use 1-1,3 % of brand related turnover to develop and establish the brands and it has been very successful.

Well, this same approach can be adopted by any b2b-company, even though Tata is a very large one. The customer-focused programs may well be the answer for them, as it has gained valuable things through different changes and processes, even though I agree with the benefits of digital marketing along with it, what you were talking about earlier.

Also, the videos are a great idea, especially with this kind of a product. I must remind you also about the networks like S mentioned, and the types of FinPro that help them connect with potential customers. I liked S's list very much, which gave us a great tool for these kind of cases.

Have a great Wappu, I will examine this case some more later.

H

Re: Short timeframe for discussion

by **Group member 4** - Tuesday, 30 April 2013, 11:58 AM

Key words: b2b branding, customer focus

Re: Short timeframe for discussion

by **Group member 3** - Tuesday, 30 April 2013, 04:13 PM

Hi

According to the book *Creating Powerful Brands* by Leslie de Chernatony et al., organizations should aim at involving their target audiences in desired experiences and treat them as trusted partners. For a successful online brand this means a brand community, where the target audiences have a possibility to actively co-create the brand and receive and share information with the brand itself and with other customers via e.g. Social media platforms.

Very important part of the online brand is the experience that the target audience perceives. The experience is formed from factors such as the usability of the internet site (or other platform), information received from the platform, the community aspects (not necessarily social media communities) and overall value the target audience experiences to receive.

Successful internet branding generates strong brand equity. To create brand equity, brand managers should be less concerned with creating prior expectations, and instead, they should focus on the creation of a positive experience online by creating emotional connection with the customer, establishing trust and ensuring that the online and offline services are consistent.

Key words: brand equity, online brand experience

BR, E

Re: Short timeframe for discussion

by **Group member 1** - Wednesday, 1 May 2013, 03:35 PM

Hi,

there has been many mentions in our discussion about LinkedIn and using it for building brand awareness. I found an article related to this “Increase Brand Awareness and Engagement on LinkedIn: 10 Tips” (yes... tips again...)

<http://socialmediatoday.com/stephaniefrasco/1337816/how-to-increase-brand-awareness-engagement-link>

It tells that 35% of LinkedIn users use it daily, mainly for business and that LinkedIn produces more leads for B2B companies than Facebook, Twitter or blogs. Sounds good for our water filtration company!

Here some of the issues handled in the article, the rest you can read from the article
Update your account: Pay little extra for an upgrade in order to have more data – for example, then you can see who have viewed your profile.

Connect with people: Those who have viewed your profile must be interested in your company. (new customers, collaborators, investors?) Connect with them. As LinkedIn is the most open network with no private setting, those people are more willing to accept your request than e.g. in Facebook and thus new business opportunities can be found more easily.

Join groups: 81% of LinkedIn users belong at least to some group. Find your industry related group(s) and join them – your competitors already are there and your future customers browse them through, so don't be absent. Being part of industry group gives you the possibility to brand yourself as an expert in the industry.

Build your company page: You can upload photos there – like discussed earlier in this trigger – photos are very impactful, so use them a lot. In company page you can also share articles, videos and slide shows about your company, presenting your company in all the possible ways to catch the attention. To have a complete company page, remember to fill out the Product & Service part. If LinkedIn profile is the first impression that customers get from you, you don't want to miss the possibility to tell about your products and services. However, there are quite many companies in LinkedIn that have not bothered to fill it, i.e. Kärcher AB and Novartis.

keywords: LinkedIn, increasing brand awareness

I am having a quite calm Vappu, using this day off for making school stuff

Enjoy the sunshine!

BR, S

Re: Short timeframe for discussion

by **Group member 2** - Thursday, 2 May 2013, 12:41 AM

Hello Ladies,

Great stuff we have here. I hope you had a great Vappu.

We have talked a lot about b2b branding and social media and especially LinkedIn.

Considering that the main purpose a company decides to start a LinkedIn account and strategy is to create awareness and make sales.

I have found this cool article on Harvard Business Review that take a look at how sales people use LinkedIn to sell more:

Article link:

http://blogs.hbr.org/cs/2013/04/top_salespeople_use_linked.html

According to the article and the survey it presents, there are 4 types of LinkedIn users.

Each user category has the possibility to generate more or less sales.

Enthusiasts: Enthusiasts have fully developed LinkedIn accounts and use LinkedIn continuously during the day. They believe it is an important tool for generating product interest and promoting their company to potential customers. Enthusiasts were more likely to be outside salespeople responsible for acquiring new accounts.

Casual: They consider LinkedIn a useful tool to research and learn more about prospective clients.

Personal: Their main purpose for having a LinkedIn account is for job-related networking and they rarely, if ever, use LinkedIn for work-related purposes.

Non-Participants: Non-Participants don't have a LinkedIn account or their profile contains very little personal information and fewer than 20 contacts.

The interesting part of this article is the fact that it reveals something that i already knew for my own experience. You can make money with LinkedIn. According to the survey, 40% of enthusiast have generated revenue from LinkedIn and 20% of casual users have generated revenue as well.

When i used to work for this Finnish software company called Blancco, i was given a market area and a product portfolio and had to generate sales. I started to use LinkedIn

to generate leads. After one year of business in East Europe i have realized that 90% of my sales revenue came from companies whose contacts i found on LinkedIn.

This tool is so amazing that not only you can create awareness about your products and services but you can also generate considerable amount of sales.

In the end i leave you with an interesting chart about B2B branding on LinkedIn and Twitter.

Article link: <http://www.b2bmarketing.net/news/archive/social-media-news-b2b-brand-activity-linkedin-and-twitter-doubles>

Keywords: LinkedIn, B2B branding, LinkedIn based revenue.

Again, great job every one of you. Let's try to get some more stuff by the end of tomorrow/ today.

Have a great rest of the week.

C

Re: Short timeframe for discussion

by **Group member 4** - Thursday, 2 May 2013, 09:57 AM

Good Fellows,

E had a good point in keeping and presenting a simple approach and later about making a positive impact on customers. Through digital medias like Pinterest (all new to me!), LinkedIn and Twitter also B2B-brand can create networks, which is very interesting and maybe not so obvious after all?

This info tells that one must notice so many things around the marketing. One of my friends wanted to establish a brewery in Finland and told about his marketing problems, that maybe someone could help by giving small hints? Well, I think it can't just be done through small hints, even though they can also be valuable. The whole pallet should be noticed and really do an effort for it. When you think of small breweries in Finland, there are many, but only some are known. Do you know for example Stallhagen from Åland? They have great beer, a great brand and packing, but they must battle hard to bring their products out more. Uups, their web page is only in Swedish, what a mistake! Or is it? Maybe they did it on purpose?

Oh, this was little carried away from the original subject, as this was about consumer products—even though they should of course market to businesses to have their products in the shops as well. About branding, I found this nice site, where the matter

was about personal branding: <http://www.b2bmarketinginsider.com/social-media/personal-branding>. It is as in LinkedIn or Twitter you can create personal branding and you should too, to have your product known. It helps you get more personal, much more contacts and in the end like Cpresented, much more business.

Sunny regards, H

Key words: personal branding

Re: Short timeframe for discussion

by **Group member 2** - Thursday, 2 May 2013, 10:49 PM

Hello Ladies,

Great job on this trigger. Unfortunately i am not able to post the conclusions tonight. I will do it tomorrow. There is quit a lot that we have accomplished with this trigger in such a short time. But then again we did a great job with every trigger...

Just wanted to thank you for this discussion.

Have a good evening,

C

Re: Short timeframe for discussion

by **Teacher** - Friday, 3 May 2013, 12:03 PM

Great work, everyone! It is a pleasure to observe and read your posts and see your dedication to learning together. You mostly refer very fluently to your sources with your own words and thoughts, explaining the theories and applying them to practice. And you refer to each other, thus engaging in a really good discussion. Very good work regarding both 3.1. and 3.2. Keep up the good work, and I know you will.

Kind regards

M

Re: Short timeframe for discussion

by **Group member 2** - Friday, 3 May 2013, 11:23 PM

Hello Ladies,

Thank you for a great discussion as usual. I think that during this trigger we have learned quite a lot about B2B branding through social media and digital marketing. As usual the discussion was constructive and very knowledgeable.

We have learned about:

Different digital marketing tools such as website, email, blog, social media, video, search engine optimization, etc. and their contentedness.

The fact that whatever the company does to generate awareness and sales it has to be consistent and true to itself and its audience.

That it is not enough to just put up some content it has to be: easy to understand, distinct, easy to share, easy to find, always on, human and consistent.

Great content is the what generates traffic and leads to sales. Furthermore, great content will be shared by others and thus more visibility of your brand.

That in order to be successful on social media and especially on LinkedIn you need to: update your account, connect with people, join groups and build a company webpage.

That LinkedIn is a very powerful tool and as with every social group there are different types of users. The more active the user the higher the revenue it generates.

References

Online sources:

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<http://www.slideshare.net/dellsocialmedia/powering-the-possible-through-social-media#text-version>

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<http://www.linkedin.com/today/post/article/20130429113637-15077789-how-to-write-more-successful-blog->

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<http://mashable.com/2013/04/28/p-commerce-definition/>

<http://socialmediatoday.com/stephaniefrasco/1337816/how-to-increase-brand-awareness-engagement-link>

http://blogs.hbr.org/cs/2013/04/top_salespeople_use_linked.html

<http://www.b2bmarketing.net/news/archive/social-media-news-b2b-brand-activity-linkedin-and-twitter-doubles>

<http://www.b2bmarketinginsider.com/social-media/personal-branding>

Books:

The Brand Against the Machine

Guerilla Social Media Marketing

B2B Brand Management

Creating Powerful Brands

If you have more to add please do so.

Thank you M for your support and kind words.

All the best and have a nice weekend.

C

Group 2

Opening discussion:

Group member 5:

Hi

I would like to suggest a problem for this trigger:

What is the most cost efficient way to increase brand awareness?

Learning objectives:

What communication methods should be used to generate awareness and sales when the budget is very limited?

Is social media a cost effective communication tool?

Key words: brand awareness, social media, communication

Group member 2:

Hi all!

I am agree with T basically. My proposition below.

Problem: Brand Communication through social media

Learning Objectives:

1. Value of social media in brand communication nowadays
2. Methods for communicating the brand through social media

Keywords: brand communication, social media

Group member 4:

Little budget, need to create brand awareness, sounds to me like **brand advertising innovation!** In other words, how can a company advertise creatively? 😊

Problem:

A company needs to be creative in advertising their company with the little resource available to them. How can they generate public awareness that way?

Learning Objectives:

1. What is brand advertising innovation?
 - 1a. How can a company advertise creatively?
2. What is the value of online presence for a company in this day and age?
3. What methods and tools exist for online advertising - and how to choose the best option for your company?

Group member 3:

Hi all! I also agree with the previous comments. Here are my suggestions:

Problem:

What kind of marketing is effective nowadays for a small company with a small budget?

Learning objectives:

-How to make marketing more effective?

-Are new marketing communication, for example social media tools, more effective than the traditional ones and how?

Group member 1:

Hi all.. Sorry as once again I'm a bit late.

I think that we should think of broader brand communication methods that than just social media or even marketing. I think that PR is also one cornerstone of brand communication as usually consumers/customers rely more on information gained through media than from brand marketing. Also, the trigger is about B2B markets which might have a bit different premises than consumer marketing.

Problem?

How to create brand recognition in B2B market the most efficient way?

Learning objectives?

What are the characteristics of B2B marketing

Which communication channels are the most important for B2B branding and how to use them the most efficient way?

What is the role of Social Media for B2B companies in branding

Keywords:

B2B markets, B2B brand recognition, Social Media in B2B markets

What do you think?

M

Let me know what you think of my suggestion and let's try to conclude the opening discussion tomorrow.

Thanks!

Group member 5:

I agree that we need to focus on communication in general, not just marketing or social media.

I also did think about should we concentrate only on b2b, but then I didn't include it in the learning objectives since I was wondering how much theoretical background can be found...

I think your first learning objective is a bit too broad and we should discuss about marketing communications and communications, not marketing since it includes elements such as price, product etc. that are not relevant in this trigger.

And finally, I think we need to include the cost factor in the learning objectives.

Group member 1:

Hi T

The characteristics of b2b differ quite a lot from b2c so I think we should concentrate on the b2b market. I'm also not quite sure of the theories, but there are a lot of best practices and policies which we can discuss about.

I agree about focusing on the marketing communications, that is actually what I meant, but forgot to write it so.

I was also thinking of the cost factor, but then I started thinking is it really needed as all companies' need to think of it in their actions.. But maybe it's better to be there.

others, any comments?

Group member 2:

M, I would agree with you about first point (broader brand communication methods than just social media), but disagree that we should focus on B2B only.

Group member 1

Hi E

Thanks for your comments. Could you explain a bit more why you think that we should not concentrate on b2b sector?

I could explain my views a bit more maybe. In the trigger the company has "revolutionary product for industrial water filtration", which would suggest that we're talking about b2b sector. Also until now we've been mainly discussing generally about branding and also b2c branding and as I stated earlier the characteristics differ from b2c sector so it would be good for us to discuss also of b2b branding.

But please let me know of your reasons for not focusing on the b2b, thanks ;)

Group member 2:

M, why should we limit to b2b? As you said, we have more broader approach from the beginning. In relation to social media in branding we can touch all aspects - b2b, b2c, etc. I think more interesting the relationships in b2c in connection to social media since we are all now under influence no matter if we want and acknowledge it or not, aren't we?

Group member 1:

Hi E

Thanks for your response. I disagree with you as the discussion problem should be derived from the trigger and the company was operating in b2b sector. Also I think that it might be good to have a bit more narrow focus so the discussion won't start rambling.

But hopefully other's have time to give their opinion!

Group member 4:

(M, I'm commenting now, didn't comment earlier, you meant E. 😊)

But if you allow me to comment, in my opinion, we need to address both B2B and B2C market. Here's why, the trigger only describes B2B, hence the way they are marketing according to trigger is adequate - no presence in social media as such does not mean they lose out. In the learning objective that I proposed, there was a point I added about what means of advertising, how to choose the correct one to use, addresses this issue.

B2B and B2C advertising is totally different. Therefore I think the point here is not to concentrate on either, but to focus on identifying the difference. Meaning how a B2B company reaches its customers as oppose to how B2C reaches the consumers. Does B2B need to consider their customer's customer? Although we know the answer to that, it is useful to elaborate on it, to enable deeper understanding.

Hence, let me suggest to add to the learning objectives the following points:

- **What is the difference between B2B and B2C advertising and brand awareness generation?**
- How does B2B market create brand awareness to its customers?**
- **Do they need social media? If so, how and why?**

Keywords: B2B, B2C, Social media, brand awareness

Group member 1:

Ok, I modified the objectives a bit. In my opinion we should concentrate on b2b branding and keep the b2c only as point of reference. Also, I added the cost factor to the objectives.

Let me know if you disagree with these. Otherwise we'll start the discussion on Tuesday.

Problem?

How to create brand recognition in B2B sector the most efficient way?

Learning objectives?

What are the main characteristics of B2B marketing communication and how does it differ from B2C?

Which communication channels are the most important for B2B sector for brand development and how to use them the most cost efficient way?

What is the role of social media for B2B companies in branding?

Keywords:

B2B, B2C, brand awareness, social media

Group member 4:

I agree with your changes M. I think we have a good way forward now. Cheers.

Group member 1:

Hi all

I could start the discussion by presenting some similarities and differences between B2B and B2C marketing. I'll start with quite broad view on marketing not only focusing on marketing communications. I must say that for me it's quite interesting to explore also B2B marketing as I have always been working with consumer marketing.

The most obvious difference is of course the target group. B2C marketing is targeted to consumers who are the final decision makers where as B2B marketing is targeted to a business or firm. Because of the complex organizational structures, B2B sales involve multiple decision makers, and the marketing mix is affected by the complexity of busi-

ness products and services, diversity of demand, and the differing nature of the sales itself.

Buyer behaviour:

Where as in B2C marketing emotional factors play a large part in a consumer's decision to purchase a product, B2B purchasing decisions are less emotional and more task-oriented. Business professionals tend to look for attributes that will deliver efficiency, productivity, and quality. B2B purchasing decisions are more rational than consumer decisions, since organizational purchases require more money and more risk for the organization.

Buyer-Customer Relationship

While B2C marketing is targeted through mass media and retailers, the negotiation process between the buyer and seller is more personal in B2B marketing. In B2B the marketing is targeted to individuals who act as influencers or decision-makers in the customer organization. In B2C the interaction with a brand typically happens via an advertisement, promotion, or transaction where as in B2B marketing it can include numerous meetings between the seller and buyer before a transaction occurs. Significant time and money are spent during the evaluation and selection process, resulting in strong brand loyalty among B2B customers.

Communications Channels:

The evaluation and selling process for B2B purchases are longer and more complex than in B2C purchases. However, B2B marketing generally entails shorter and more direct channels of distribution to target audiences. Different aspects of the promotional mix can be easily personalized due to the relationship between a B2B salesperson and the individual buyer. Most B2B marketers commit only a small part of their promotional budgets to general advertising, usually through direct marketing efforts and trade publications.

Similarities between B2C and B2B Marketing:

Marketing to a business professionals or to an individual consumer are similar in terms of the fundamental principles of marketing. Both B2C and B2B marketing objectives

reflect the fundamental principles of the marketing mix, and in both situations, the marketer must always:

- Successfully match product or service with the needs of a specific target market
- Position and price products or services to align products and service offerings with the market
- Communicate and sell products or services so that they effectively demonstrate value to the target market

Source: <https://www.boundless.com/marketing/business-to-business-marketing/business-markets/b2b-versus-consumer-marketing-similarities-and-differences/>

Keywords: B2B, B2C, differences, similarities

Group member 2:

I want to touch a little bit more about difference between B2C and B2B. According to article above the initial step in establishing marketing strategies is somewhat similar – to identify your target customer (and as M mentioned above as well) and figure out why this potential customer needs to hear your message. Then it's go in different ways.

Summary of key differences between B2B and B2C marketing:

B2C:

- Product driven
- Maximize the value of the transaction
- Large target market
- Single step buying process, shorter sales cycle
- Brand identity created through repetition and imagery
- Merchandising and point of purchase activities
- Emotional buying decision based on status, desire, or price

B2B:

- Relationship driven
- Maximize the value of the relationship
- Small, focused target market
- Multi-step buying process, longer sales cycle

- Brand identity created on personal relationship
- Educational and awareness building activities
- Rational buying decision based on business value

Loyalty is an important aspect in B2C marketing. **Companies combine good customer service and education on their product and services** (like Amazon, Best Buy, Staples) thus their customers keep coming back.

The sales cycle in the B2B world is often much longer and more complex. It mainly maximizes on the value of relationships. A B2B company needs to focus on maintaining communication and building relationships.

In the B2B sales cycle, **e-mail campaign is usually the first step towards a series of integrated touch** campaign that may include telemarketing, direct mail, and personal follow up by sales representatives who will thoroughly discuss business details and move the prospect on the next step of the sales cycle. In B2B, “content is king” for marketing paraphernalia.

Having a strong brand is important for both the B2B and B2C site, however, it is for different reasons. Besides loyalty having a strong brand also means that the company has the potential to charge a higher price than a competitor. For example, Nike can charge more for its shoes, which might be similar to a competitor’s because its brand name carries a certain image that consumers want to have. The same is true for an online brand. When consumers recognize a brand, there is a certain amount of trust that goes along with it. Consumers tend to trust sites they have heard of over those they have not. The B2C site, for most part, relies on appealing to consumer’s emotions, playing to their desires, style trends, and image. With a B2B site, brand identity is created through personal relationships and will only help a business to be considered, not necessarily chosen. B2B buyers use more rational thought when choosing a product/service for their company and then to be motivated by cutting costs, increasing profitability, and increasing productivity.

Keywords: B2B marketing, B2C marketing

Source: <http://apextwo.com/b2b-vs-b2c-marketing-difference-why-it-matters/>
<http://www.123helpme.com/bb-vs-bc-marketing-view.asp?id=163752>

Group member 3:

Which communication channels are the most important for brand development and how to use them the most cost efficient way? What is the role of social media in branding?

I'm focusing on marketing communication, as I think the whole marketing concept is too wide for one discussion. The digital channels seems to be more and more popular every year. In general those channels are often easier to measure the results than the traditional ones and the content can be shared in many occasions, if compared to for example print. The online marketing communications have increased constantly and is predicted to increase even more, according to Divia reserch social media advertising has increased the most but also mobile solutions have increased during the last years. According to Divia 2013 the most important online marketing communication channel seems the to be the company website. Then online newsletters, search engine advertising and social media solutions. Also direct email advertising and online advertising (for example banners) are mentioned.

The resources are usually limited for small companies but still marketing communications is needed in order to get sales, especially with start-up companies efficiency is very much needed in order to get best results. A good solution for this is to use social media and Google marketing. Nowadays multi-channel marketing is popular as it can be very efficient but the messages should be integrated and in line with each other. In B2B marketing LinkedIn is a good source to get reliability. Also by blogging can increase the knowledge of a brand and get visibility (also in search engines). In Finland Facebook is the most popular social media platform and in many cases this channels completes quite nicely other channels.

Choosing the correct and most efficient marketing channel always depends on the company and it's business and what they want to achieve with it. Social media is not any more efficient than traditional ones if the implementation is not done correctly and if it does not serve the focus group.

Sources: <http://www.divia.fi/divia/sites/default/files/Digibarometri%202013.pdf>
<http://www.vtt.fi/inf/pdf/tiedotteet/2008/T2450.pdf>

Key words: marketing communication, efficiency, digital and print marketing, social media solutions

Group member 1: Hello J

Thanks for your posting. As the company in the trigger is operating in b2b sector, let's try to find solution how **they** can utilize social media efficiently. I think that selecting the whole marketing communications platform is also quite wide for one discussion, and thus I made the decision to focus the discussion objectives on b2b

Group member 3

Yes I meant that those channels and tools I mentioned in my posting can be also used for B2B marketing, as said it all depends on the actual company and their goals. I based those channels/tools to Divia 2013 report which is done in Finnish companies. This is from the report:

"B2C yritykset ovat odotetusti aktiivisempia käyttämään digitaalisia kanavia markkinoinnissaan, mutta erityisesti sähköpostista ja hakukonemarkkinoinnista on tullut vakioväline myös B2B-yrityksille." Freely translated in English: B2C companies are more active in using digital channels in their marketing, as expected, but especially email advertising and search engine optimization have become a regular tool also for B2B companies.

Group member 4:

I think you've had a good theoretic start here. However, there is really a lot to B2B marketing than meets the eye. For instance, it is not so much reaching for as much customer as possible, as it is customer retention when we talk about B2B. In my opinion, social media such as Facebook, does very little to help a B2B company marketing, it is more of a PR thing. One other aspect to consider with social media is the challenges of getting proper data, measurements and report which are factors important to B2B business. Also the advantage of reaching the end-user (customer's customer) via social media depends very much on the industry. On the other hand, when talking about digital media, for B2B that could mean e.g. webpages, it means utilizing the digital world within a closed setting such as business labs, seminars, consortium etc, to promote their business and brand awareness.

There is a nice blog about **B2B marketing framework** that will give you an idea about how it is done (check source). The complexity of how companies bring forth awareness of their brands is pretty interesting, and very different from B2C. We're talking

about aligning their strategies, business models etc to the buyer's company. They need to segment themselves, their products and services. The buyers normally talk about investments, not like going shopping for clothes or shoes. The supplier needs to capture not only the attention of the buyer, but in fact also the value for the end-users. A long term relationship (see previous postings from E and M regarding the differences of B2B and B2C, where B2B requires more relationship management) is built through long term partnership. This is the customer loyalty management that will enable customer retention. When a B2B wants to sell more, they have something called "lead generation". This simply means to add value to their customer's business by finding them sources of revenue.

Normally we're talking about big capitals for buyers, and even bigger revenue stream for suppliers before they can take on a business. So that is just to give you a picture of the scale. You can imagine for example, the telecom companies, factory equipment/machine suppliers, construction equipment suppliers, just to mention a few different industries.

B2B company handle their sales and marketing through "Accounts", where each accounts take care of one or more customers depending on size. B2B companies often initiate their business by the tendering process. **Tender** "is a special procedure for generating competing offers from different bidders looking to obtain an award of business activity in works"

Ok, so you get the idea. Let me look for further materials to share. What I discuss above is just based on my 14 years experience in a B2B company.

Keywords: B2B marketing framework, tendering, brand awareness

Source:

B2B marketing framework

<http://everythingtechnologymarketing.blogspot.fi/2010/07/simple-b2b-marketing-framework.html>

Tender Definition

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Call_for_bids

Group member 4:

My following entry addresses these two questions:

Which communication channels are the most important for B2B sector for brand development and how to use them the most cost efficient way?

What is the role of social media for B2B companies in branding?

It also give some more insights on their budget issues, as one reason they turn towards social media.

According to the eMarketer, Social media includes more than just social networks. The term encompasses consumer reviews, blogging, microblogging (Twitter, for example), photo- and video-sharing, user-generated content, viral marketing and wikis. Social media marketing uses these channels to engage and interact with customers.

Social media is still a very new concept for B2B marketing, although its usage is now increasing rapidly with the different industries. Below are some examples how B2B marketers are using social media.

Continuing from what I mentioned in my previous post about "Lead Generation", social media is a valuable tool for that. According to eMarketer, B2B companies are finding that social media sites can be useful for prospecting research and lead generation.

IBM, for example, has an internal program to mine conversations on social media sites for valid prospects. ("Data Mining" is one way B2B do their consumer research.)

B2B companies showcase their expertise and thought leadership on social media sites.

American Express OPEN uses its OPEN Forum to share insights and advice with small-business owners. By creating original and exclusive content for the forum, the company can become an important information resource for its members.

Integrated campaigns can be more effective than single, stand-alone initiatives. Tried-and-true marketing tactics, like e-mail and search, should not be abandoned. Instead, B2B marketers ought to consider adding social media initiatives to traditional campaigns to boost their effectiveness.

Essentially, B2B are taking a hard look at their budgets and turning to more creative ways to reach their customers. They are moving more of their marketing budgets online like the consumer-oriented companies. To them accountability is most im-

portant, and B2B marketers are reassessing which media will give them the best return on investments (ROI).

Attached I provide some facts on how they spend for marketing in social media vs traditional.

Keywords: B2B marketers, ROI, Social media

Source: eMarketer, June 2010, B2B Social Media Marketing Heats Up

Group member 5:

Hey

I would like to first address the social media and its role in B2b branding

Whatever you're selling, the decision to purchase it (or not) is going to be made by a human. A real live person with emotions, hopes and dreams. B2B marketing is not about selling to businesses, but to the people who work for those businesses. Behind every RFP, procurement team and competitive bidding process, there are people who want to hear your story. They want to understand why your company, your brand, can better meet their needs.

The process is always about connection. That's where social media comes into play, and that's **why Social Media for B2B Branding is so important.**

2012 was a banner year for social media in many ways, as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Pinterest continued to grow in size and power. As a result, B2B companies are finding it increasingly attractive to embrace these and other social networking platforms.

64 percent of B2B companies are already invested in social media marketing, with Facebook and Twitter being the most preferred social network of these companies.

Why should B2B companies to start using social media?

- social media facilitates customer acquisition and retention
- a good social media marketing strategy promotes credibility & professionalism of the brand
- it offers a tremendous potential for networking

Companies cited three top reasons for using social media: **creating brand awareness (83%)**, encouraging social sharing (56%) and gaining trust and followers (55%). Under one third (32%) said they use it for lead generation, while only 16% use social media **to assess market perception of their brand.**

Social media for B2B branding is about bringing new life to your business. It's about getting out of the Sahara and into a refreshing environment where connections and communities help Business2Business brands thrive.

Some of the critical goals of B2B branding via social media include:

- Building better relationships with partners, prospects and customers.
- Attracting prospective customers and compressing sales cycles.
- Monitoring competitive positioning and ensuring you're ahead.
- Establishing thought leadership in your industry.
- **Building brand awareness and preference among decision makers.**

Keywords: social media, brand awareness building

Sources:

<http://unbounce.com/social-media/b2b-social-media/>

<http://www.mobilemarketingwatch.com/infographic-how-b2b-brands-can-make-smart-use-of-social-media-this-year-30149/>

<http://socialmediatoday.com/nealschaffer/836346/why-smart-marketers-use-social-media-b2b-branding>

Group member 1:

Hey

Thank you all for the active start for the discussion!

I was thinking of how to make this more interesting than just posting articles and theories. As the discussion problem was to find efficient way of creating brand awareness in b2b sector, what if everyone would make concrete marketing communication plan for the company? This wouldn't have to be anything too heavy, but just to make it more tangible.

- Objectives
- Strategy
- Tactics
- Implementation

Might be a stupid idea, but let me know what you think of it ;)

Group member 4:

Something concrete is a good idea M. As long as it helps the understanding. I suppose you mean to make it for the company in the trigger? Or should we stick to our learning objectives?

Group member 4:

Perhaps if we want something concrete, we could give example to each of the points below? I took the points from E's entry as characteristics fo B2B marketing.

. Relationship driven

- Maximize the value of the relationship
- Small, focused target market
- Multi-step buying process, longer sales cycle
- Brand identity created on personal relationship
- Educational and awareness building activities
- Rational buying decision based on business value

Group member 5:

I think this is a very good idea M, I would really like something different for a change since we have been having these similar discussion already for three months now 😊. And I think we should make a communications plan for the trigger company, and at the same time keep the learning objectives in mind - I am sure we're able to do both!

Group member 1:

Really good and informative posts E, thanks! It's good that we have someone who is acquainted with b2b marketing ;)

Group member 4:

Brand visionaries, I'd like to share one source with you, so that we can discuss the case. It is a very good case that addresses our learning objectives. The example is "Du Pont". But I cannot attach the presentation here. So I attach the introduction. If you like this idea, then I will send the whole presentation to you by email. And we can discuss it.

Source: 2011 Frost & Sullivan

Group member1:

Sounds interesting, share the presentation with us! ;)

Group member 2:

Second it. E, send us what you have so we can look at it and discuss. I am on business trip since Tuesday, April 30, so I have limited time.

Group member 2:

Below is my view of how characteristics of B2B marketing reflected by DuPont's actions.

Relationship driven

DuPont had created more than 40 social media projects across 7 or 12 global units

Maximize the value of the relationship

Developed the listening strategy that provides ongoing insights into brand, products, and markets. 60% of DuPont business units engage in social media. DuPont established governance for social media across the enterprise. Created social media pilots that support social media objectives and address broader marketing challenges.

Small, focused target market

DuPont determined which social media channels are its audience. 40 global media project have been approved and are underway. DuPont run pilots that help refine social media marketing capabilities over time.

Multi-step buying process, longer sales cycle

Via social media DuPont engage prospects in meaningful conversations over extended periods of time. 15X more DuPont business units engage in ongoing listening. DuPont measures brand awareness and sentiment.

Brand identity created on personal relationship

Before starting any social media activity DuPont ensures it has the internal resources and capabilities to participate at the activity level that matches its strategy; it augments

any resource gaps with an outside agency. DuPont implemented Social media request form to ensure preparedness for each participant.

□ Educational and awareness building activities

DuPont monitors online conversations around its brands and products to identify the channels where the critical mass of conversations exists and therefore warrants attention. DuPont build a corporate resource center to support companywide social media activity.

□ Rational buying decision based on business value

DuPont mine existing online conversations for valuable customer insights. Social Media Center of Excellence (CoE) provides advice and consulting by marketing leader.

What do you think? I found that some of these actions by DuPont can be related to several characteristics of B2B market at the same time. Let's discuss.

Keywords: social media marketing B2B.

Source: 2011 Frost & Sullivan

Group member 1:

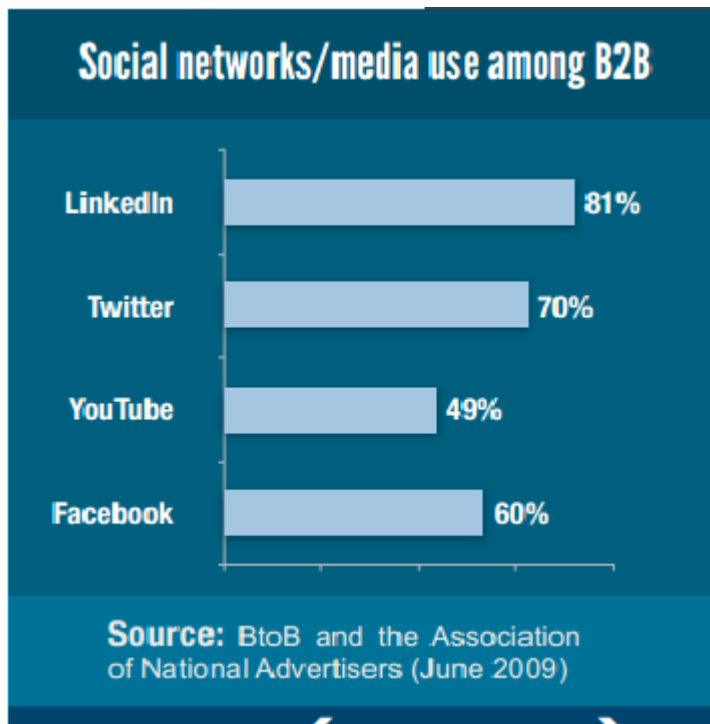
Would be nice if we would get these done by Tuesday so we would have few days to discuss 😊

Group member 2:

Addressing our learning objective 3: What is the role of social media for B2B companies in branding? I would like to share interesting article (link below).

Here is why social media important for B2B :

- More than 133 million blogs indexed since 2002
- More than 10 million users create 1,500 new "tweets" every second
- Facebook user growth for the 35-plus demographic has grown to 12 million users in the first quarter of 2009



And as already discussed and on example of DuPont unlike traditional B2C marketing channels (ads, campaigns, etc.), social media allows more people in organization to engage and build relationships with customers and prospects.

The B2B market is far smaller than the B2C market. This fact alone impels expanding your reach to identify new leads. Social media is well-placed to do just that. And again, the example of DuPont is very well illustrating this.

The remarkable thing about the B2B arena is how people in it actively network online to share knowledge and build their network of industry contacts. Using social media, they can now build professional communities online to share insights and solve problems, and leverage upon these interactions to build brand, reputation and prospects.

B2B buyers rely heavily on third-party feedback in making purchase decisions. They would also like to be part of the product or solution development process. They are also likely to trust the opinions of colleagues using the products far more than that of the company selling those very products. Social media channels are great avenues for providing objective, third party experiences and feedback, reduces buyer-side risk for big-ticket B2B purchases.

Social media engagements are a good platform to consistently demonstrate thought leadership (well done by DuPont as well). Social media is cost-effective. Social media offers unprecedented and abundant avenues for knowledge sharing that can help educate prospects and facilitate faster sales cycles in B2B.

Author argued that the first thing an organization needs to do to kickstart their social media marketing campaign is to draw up a social media strategy. The social media strategy is an extension of the overall marketing strategy. It needs to be commensurate with the business and the market you are targeting. This keeps your brand identity unified across the board.

Then do research for a target audience. From analyzing these conversations you will be able to identify and learn what your brand perception is as well as that of your competitors, what drives your brand and identify white space which possibly will provide opportunities for you to improve and grow your brand perception. Listening to your customers and being critical in your analysis of their conversations gives your organization an immediate advantage as you can leverage on the positives in these communications and work on what your consumers perceive to be the negatives of the brand. Researching into your brand conversations will also help you to identify your evangelists and detractors and see how influential they are based on their reader base.

Set your guidelines. From analyzing these conversations you will be able to identify and learn what your brand perception is as well as that of your competitors, what drives your brand and identify white space which possibly will provide opportunities for you to improve and grow your brand perception. Listening to your customers and being critical in your analysis of their conversations gives your organization an immediate advantage as you can leverage on the positives in these communications and work on what your consumers perceive to be the negatives of the brand. Researching into your brand conversations will also help you to identify your evangelists and detractors and see how influential they are based on their reader base.

Get cracking. It's not enough for an organization to just make it visible on a social media platform. You have to create value through the content you make available for your readers and consumers and you have to be regular and consistent with your content creation and distribution. Offer insight into your expertise through well written and meaningful articles on your corporate blog. Establish your position as thought leaders and the proven experts as it increase customer confidence. Any organization that embarks on a social media campaign needs to actively participate in conversations relevant to the brand and its goals.

There also very good real business examples in this article and this article in my opinion very well contribute to shared by E presentation of DuPont.

Keywords: social media for B2B branding

Source:

<http://www.ht2.co.uk/socialjunction/MCeBooks/1328883182SocialMediaB2B.pdf>

Group member 4:

I think E brought out good points from DuPont case. I will add also my two cents in-line blue color. So that we have it in the same place. I agree to a certain degree to E's perspective, however I think some of the characteristics here are not that visibly put from the DuPont case, perhaps because it is about building competence.

- **Relationship driven**

- DuPont had created more than 40 social media projects across 7 or 12 global units
- Social media marketing is a long-term commitment, which requires the involvement of a lot of people. These are relationship building blocks.

- **Maximize the value of the relationship**

- Developed the listening strategy that provides ongoing insights into brand, products, and markets. 60% of DuPont business units engage in social media. DuPont established governance for social media across the enterprise. Created social media pilots that support social media objectives and address broader marketing challenges.
- They (DuPont) train their social media people and they adhere to ways or working. And also pay attention to how they represent their company values and conduct on the internet.

- **Small, focused target market**

DuPont determined which social media channels are its audience. 40 global media project have been approved and are underway. DuPont run pilots that help refine social media marketing capabilities over time.

- B2B market is like what it says, business to business, clearly one business has to target another business and cannot just address the whole population like for example busi-

ness to consumer selling clothes or food; everyone need to wear clothes (regardless of style and budget) and they eat, the market is therefore wider. However if you sell restaurant kitchen equipment, obviously you would want to target restaurants and not households or offices.

- **Multi-step buying process, longer sales cycle**

Via social media DuPont engage prospects in meaningful conversations over extended periods of time. 15X more DuPont business units engage in ongoing listening. DuPont measures brand awareness and sentiment.

- This point also refers to B2B sales characteristics, which is actually not so obvious in the social media world. The buying process could take up to 6 months to a year. The relationship is being developed during the process.

- **Brand identity created on personal relationship**

- Before starting any social media activity DuPont ensures it has the internal resources and capabilities to participate at the activity level that matches its strategy; it augments any resource gaps with an outside agency. DuPont implemented Social media request form to ensure preparedness for each participant.

- the company has values they normally portrait to outside world which represent their identity. In social media this comes out by trained personnel communicating and creating personal relationship. In DuPont's case this can be seen as their trained social media personnel both internal and external e.g. their champions and adhering to their company rules. They see this as no difference from face-to-face relationship building.

- **Educational and awareness building activities**

DuPont monitors online conversations around its brands and products to identify the channels where the critical mass of conversations exists and therefore warrants attention. DuPont build a corporate resource center to support companywide social media activity.

-They also need to educate the market about why they matter. Sure, existing customers are very important, but social media is a way to talk to the people who may not be doing business with you now. It's also a way to reach the media, analysts and other people who don't buy your products but influence those who do.

- **Rational buying decision based on business value**

-

- - DuPont mine existing online conversations for valuable customer insights. Social Media Center of Excellence (CoE) provides advice and consulting by marketing leader.
- - The characteristic of B2b refers to the sales and buying process. It all boils down to how much business value is offered by different parties and not necessary based on direct sales price - it is about how much business potential they sale can generate. As I mentioned earlier, it is big investment, hence, rational decisions need to be made.
-
- Source: 2011 Frost & Sullivan
-
- **Group member 4:**

And now to address the learning objectives based on some combined sources.

1) What are the main characteristics of B2B marketing communication and how does it differ from B2C?

We defined the characteristics already earlier here, so I won't go further into that (see character point list and DuPont as example). But regarding the B2B communication, I believe the characteristics defines that. It is stated in a couple of sources [1] [2] that the B2B and B2C usage of social media is merging. Both B2B and B2C companies use social media to drive brand awareness and traffic to their sites. They also use it to connect with customers, prospects and colleagues.

2) Which communication channels are the most important for B2B sector for brand development and how to use them the most cost efficient way?

The bar graph below shows an example of where B2B marketers allocate their budgets, which indicates the most relevant communication channels for them. According to Goldstein Group, the most important channel is Online Advertising. Surprisingly enough however, email comes in second and web development only 3rd. This is very interesting.

3) What is the role of social media for B2B companies in branding?

According to how the B2B companies are using social media we can derive that the role of it is to generate awareness of brand. As well as;

- customer engagement;
- engage influencers;
- market products;
- generate leads;
- advertising;
- customer feedback.

See the graphs I attached for further visualization.

Keywords: B2B marketing, social media

Source:

[1] RUTH McNEIL, BUSINESS TO BUSINESS MARKET RESEARCH, MARKET RESEARCH IN PRACTICE UNDERSTANDING AND MEASURING BUSINESS MARKETS

[2] Evelyn Jung, eMarketer, B2B Social Media Marketing Heats Up, June 2010

Group member 3:

Hi guys,

Sorry I haven't been able to participate for few days because we have had some internet issues with Elisa. Not that great B2B marketing/service from them... Anyways.

I like the graphs you have posted about B2B marketing and social media. Those show nicely that there are many tools available, it's more about selecting the right tools for that particular strategy.

Group member 3:

I wanted to add the point that there needs to be a social media strategy behind all good implementations and that these social media tactics should be also **measured**.

Here is a great page about B2B social media marketing, setting objectives and measuring it: <http://socialmediab2b.com/2013/04/b2b-social-media-measurable-objectives/>
I feel that one great feature in most social media tools is that they are easy to measure and that the data is easily available. This helps in planning the implementations and modifying actions.

Keywords: measuring, social media tools

Source: <http://socialmediab2b.com/2013/04/b2b-social-media-measurable-objectives/>

Group member 3:

Have to add also this great Facebook Page about B2B social media marketing:

<https://www.facebook.com/SocialMediaB2B>

Group member 1:

Hello J

Good to hear from you ;) Thanks for the interesting links. I think that rather than just posting links, we should present the connection of the articles to our learning objectives and also link them to practice.

Group member 1:

As I was the one suggesting us to develop a marketing communication plan for the company in the trigger, please find my light weight plan / proposal below. So, how to maximize the brand awareness in B2B sector with minimum budget?

- Objectives

- Generate brand awareness
- Find the right target group
- Generate leads and secure new customers/business

- Implementation

The first thing to do is to examine the brand identity, is it strong enough and does it describe well enough what the company is all about. Brand needs to be positioned correctly so that it differentiates from other businesses offering similar services, in other words the company needs a strong Unique Selling Proposition to be used within each marketing message. My first suggestion for the brand manager is to **examine and make necessary revisions to the brand identity.**

Second advice would be to select the key target markets and undertake a thorough **market intelligence program** before and during international expansion to understand the key markets, track and anticipate changes and evaluate the degree of suc-

cess. This is something that will require some budget, but when you know the market situation, it is a lot more secure and efficient to target the minimal resources.

Thirdly, the company needs to **take control of the homepage** as it is the most important source of company information. Usually it is also the first place the prospects search for information. As the company is aiming at international markets, it is advisable to have at least the key information pages translated in local languages as even though English is often considered the business language in many industrial sectors, employees of international companies are often impressed if companies' communicate with them in their own language. One major consideration is also to make sure the pages are **search engine optimized** so that if and when the prospects search for information from the internet, they will most probably land in your page.

In addition to the brand homepage, other **digital marketing activities** are as important. First thing is to identify the role of social media. As well social media has to be integrated to the whole brand communication strategy, not just as a ad-hoc tool for quick wins. The most important factor when using social media is to know your target market. There is not much use of being in Facebook etc. if your targeted customers are not there. My suggestion for the company for digital marketing would be to:

- Take the ownership of the homepage to yourself
- Develop your homepage content and focus on SEO (keywords etc.)
- Start a blog on your homepage where you discuss about the new product, update actively
- Start using some social media monitoring tool to discover
 - o what are current issues talked on the industry and
 - o who are they key influencers
- Be active on LinkedIn
- Open a Twitter account
 - o Follow key influencers
 - o Discuss with them
 - o and post your blog there
- Be active on different discussion boards

If having enough budget, **advertising in industry magazines** is a assured way of growing the recognition within target market. In the B2B industry the specialist trade press is often well read and the company can create awareness for a relatively modest

budget. In addition, **advertising online** can help the budget go further and reach ever busier executives who turn to quality e-newsletters and portals to keep up to date. One effective way of generating awareness and demand for the new product is through **media relations**. For the greatest success, the company should plan a PR program which should include a combination of the following items and actions; Stand-alone press releases, press kits (product backgrounders, press releases and reprints of articles about the company), relationship building with key editors and customer success stories.

The best way of growing the brand awareness is meeting the potential customers **face to face** and as entering a new market, making the most of any such opportunity is wise. As the trade shows are usually very resource consuming, the company might think of other ways of presenting it on the fairs, such as holding your own event, sponsoring an aspect of the show, speaking at the conference or partnering with a distributor / partner.

Sources:

<http://andrewbarden.wordpress.com/2009/05/13/10-proven-b2b-marketing-communication-strategies-to-drive-revenue-growth/>

<http://www.bdb.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Export-marketing-whitepaper.pdf>

<http://www.sales-lead-experts.com/tips/articles/pr-b2b.cfm>

<http://www.atomicdust.com/blog/single/social-media-and-content-marketing-a-guide-for-b2b-marketing-managers/>

Group member 5:

☹️ I actually have the exact same problem as you J, DNA disconnected my internet on Friday due to a misunderstanding and because it's weekend nothing could be done about it until tomorrow 😞. And Moodle and phone does not really work that well together... this message was hard enough to post...

Anyway, I will be online again tomorrow at work and share something then!

Group member 2:

M, you did good summary. I came across info about upcoming trends in 2013 for B2B marketing via social media and want to share it. In 2013 B2B marketers is experimenting with new tactics for engagement. Below are 10 trends to expect this year:

- 1. Leveraging LinkedIn.** Some [professional services brands](#) have begun to use LinkedIn to achieve this in 2012- we can only urge more B2B marketers to jump on the bandwagon.
- 2. Engaged Executives.** more and more CEOs must realize in 2013 is that social media has the ability to showcase a more human side of the ‘man or woman in charge,’ allowing them to share their story, as well as the story of the brand they represent, in a way that key audiences can connect to and engage with.
- 3. Content is Still King.** Marketers who continue to improve their storytelling tactics, and disseminate their range of content through social media platforms as a way of gaining visibility and building stronger relationships with key audiences will find success.
- 4. Visual Engagement.** From the prevalence of employee [recruitment videos](#), to the [use of video in building CSR efforts](#), more and more B2B marketers understand why video is so effective in providing an intimate look at the people behind a brand.
- 5. Big Data Starts to Pay Off.** In 2012, B2B marketers really took advantage of the possibilities for engagement that social media offers. Now that all of this feedback from social media experimentation is trickling in, 2013 is the year for B2B marketers to start to make sense of and utilize this “big data.”
- 6. Building a Cohesive Social Brand.** Social media can act as a platform for building cohesive brand messaging in that it allows key audiences to gain a clear understanding of a company’s value proposition. More companies, who make efforts to empower their employees internally to engage with social media, are more likely to see results that lead to brand loyalty.
- 7. The Social Newsletter.** E-newsletters are an effective and convenient way to share industry insights and knowledge with brand ambassadors, prospects, clients, shareholders, and any other individuals involved in a company’s community.
- 8. Taking a Different Approach.** Often, B2B marketers assume that any content or information shared through corporate social media platforms should be exclusively industry focused—and this just isn’t true! Social media allows for companies to really show a different side of themselves. [One financial services firm](#) really took advantage of this in 2012 by using their Facebook page to share articles and book recommendations, news and insights, and general information about company employees. It looks like the Facebook page of an “outgoing and intelligent person,” rather than a financial

services firm. In 2013, B2B marketers will reexamine how social media can humanize their brands, whether this means showcasing a less serious side or focusing on topics not entirely related to their products and services. The key for building engagement is creating a unique experience that helps build positive associations with a brand.

9. Optimizing Platform Innovation. Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, (and the list continues), are constantly innovating and creating new ways for companies and individuals to build pages, profiles, and channels that allow them to customize the design and layout of their social media experience, and dazzle their followers. The more experienced marketers are with these platforms, the more they will be able to utilize the social media tools offered. Brands who utilize these new features can create a truly engaging experience.

10. The Social Pschye. One of the most overlooked but most valuable aspects of social media participation is the way in which it can help marketers to understand the needs and wants of their prospects and customers. Psychographics help define what customers want, and what better way to gain psychographic insights than through social media? By disseminating content to a certain psychographic segment, and monitoring the reactions to it, marketers can gain a greater understanding of what is on the minds of the audiences they want to reach, therefore providing them with informative data on a specific topic.

So I think there are varieties of paths mentioned and companies can choose which one to use more or less extensive according to their overall strategy and budget.

Keywords: B2B brand awareness via social media

Source:

<http://www.desantisbreindel.com/b2b-social-media-marketing-2013/>

Group member 4:

M, if I may comment on your plans. I think it's good thinking. What can be considered further is the actual budget. As you mentioned with minimal budget, however it is clear from the plan that it needs a lot of resources and it can easily blow up. I suggest including measurement methods - ways to measure the impact of the marketing communication. That way it is clear what efforts are worth doing and what not.

Group member 4:

I'd like to share a very good site for B2B articles: <http://www.btobonline.com/>

They feature there B2B best marketers and advertisers. For example the B2B marketing blog is really good. 😊

Group member 5:

Finally back online, although at work, but according to DNA I should have a connection again at home as well.

Since the budget is limited for the trigger company, I would first put emphasis on the website and its content.

B2B website home page plays a major role in lead generation and positive return on marketing investment. As M already mentioned, they should take the control of the site and make sure that the site is SEO optimized.

Once those are in place, then the focus should be on content. In my experience, by providing high quality content, a B2B company can get high customers engagement. In order to be successful in the B2B world, it's important to share information. People turn to the web for information. If you don't provide any, but your competitor has a robust portfolio of informative content that's easily accessible, who do you think that your target audience would prefer to work with? B2B content marketing is about more than just the information that's provided on a company website. It's about gaining trust and building a recognized brand amongst potential clients and customers and it can take many forms including webinars, whitepapers, e-books, articles, videos, and podcasts.

Three important content marketing tips

Inform

If done properly, B2B content marketing is all about providing information that helps your target audience. The goal is to appear to be a trusted source of information and an industry insider and expert. It helps to set you apart from the crowd. If you provide your target audience with a great resource of useful information, it's more likely that they will hold on to it and continue to use it as a reference into the future.

Don't Sell

Your target audience will be less likely to pay attention if it's obvious that you are trying to sell to them. Don't mention your brand too often or pitch your services. The content should be purely informational. If it's all about the sale it's possible that it will get tossed in the trash and ignored completely.

Promote

It takes time and effort to create content, therefore you want the right people to see it. Promoting content is essential. There are numerous ways to promote your content online. You can place ads on popular industry sites and blogs that direct a user to a customized landing page. You can write blog posts about the whitepaper, e-book, etc. and promote it via social media channels like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. You can also include information about it in your opt-in email newsletter. Don't forget to contact your business partners and ask them to help out by mentioning it or writing a review about it on their own blog.

B2B content marketing online takes time to do well. Anything that is published is a reflection of your company.

One social media tool that was missing from M' social media tool list was in my opinion **Slideshare**.

Here are just a couple of reasons why SlideShare should be used in B2B marketing:

- Slideshare is one of the top 150 most visited sites on the internet. There are over 3 billion slide views every month
- Slideshare has around five times as much traffic from business owners than Twitter or Facebook. It appears to have a much more senior audience.
- Slideshare allows you to demonstrate your ability to produce great content. You can also take existing content such as white papers or articles and create Slideshare summaries.

Keywords: SEO optimization, content marketing

Sources:

<http://www.mltcreative.com/blog/bid/83266/SEO-FYI-9-Tips-for-B2B-Website-Lead-Generation-Improvement>

<http://www.brickmarketing.com/blog/b2b-content-marketing-tips.htm>

<http://columnfivemedia.com/work-items/slideshare-infographic-the-quiet-giant-of-content-marketing/>

<http://steverayson.kineo.com/2013/04/10-reasons-to-use-slideshare-for-b2b.html>

Group member 3:

The trigger gave this information about the company:

"A small clean tech company has a revolutionary product for industrial water filtration. The brand is not yet very well known on its home market or internationally. The technology is nonetheless ground breaking and there are no similar products on the market.

The company is using some traditional marketing tools, such as fairs and trade shows but does not have any online presence in the true sense. The company website is managed externally, and the company recently created a profile on LinkedIn."

Focusing on the social media tools in the marketing plan for a small company with a small budget:

-I would also recommend that they would manage the company website internally.

Most likely with a minimum budget the newly appointed brand manager has to do this personally if possible.

-I would recommend to highlight their specialty in the products. They could post to YouTube/Vimeo some video presentations or create different photo albums in some social media platform (Flickr?) This could be done internally quite easily with limited resources.

-Blogging is also one good option but this request little bit more time but this could be a good way of getting more visibility among the professionals and a blog would also help in search engine optimization to increase the website's/company's visibility (as search engines like blogs). Also micro blogging (for example Twitter) is a good option even though this is not that search engine friendly than regular blogging.

-In B2B market I would also use online newsletters if they have some kind of customer relationship program that gather mailing lists, as those are quite cost-efficient and can be done internally.

-LinkedIn is a good place for networking and for making new connection. Also Facebook Pages about the products or the company can be a good idea for referrals. Also being active in some professional online platforms/discussion groups would be nice.

-I would maybe think of leaving the fairs and trade shows, or at least going to only the most important events, as those are really expensive often and these resources can be put to online presence (maybe to the most important professional sites) or to search engine advertising.

(Some of these ideas I presented already in my first posting).

I try to attach this image from Divia 2013 of the most popular digital marketing tools used in Finland which give some kind of idea what is currently used. As I think these are the quite basic tools a company could start with.

The problem is also that if something is done **internally** it is usually cheaper but then the company has to have the knowledge of how to implement it properly, otherwise it might look unprofessional or is not planned as it should and then it does not help as wished. On the other hand if the option is to **outsource** then it's of course more expensive and then the company has to choose maybe only one or few ways of getting visibility. As I have worked with many small companies that this is often the reality when trying to manage with limited resources and do a lot of things yourself. In start-ups it's also important that there is constant sales coming in and quite often the same persons are doing sales and branding and this is also **balancing** with time. Without sales a company can't survive but branding is needed for development.

Key words: marketing plan, website, social media platforms, internal, outsource, balancing

Group member 4:

Thanks T, for the interesting input. I have some questions and follow up for both you and M, as you referred to his post as well. You both said that the company should take "control" of their own website; and you insinuated that by doing this, it is somehow cheaper. What do you mean by "taking control"? In oppose to what exactly? And please elaborate how that is better for the budget?

And comments and questions for T's post. You mentioned that: "B2B website home page plays a major role in lead generation and positive return on marketing investment." Can you back that statement up with some facts? Like how it is measured? I'm interested in learning how to generate leads from a B2B website. I know the way we do this now involves more contact through expertise and long-term relationships. Also do you refer to internal or external usage of website for lead generation?

And a comment regarding SlideShare, it's true that it is used a lot for many things including B2B marketing. I also have the impression that is cited a lot for educational purposes and for technological awareness. That being said, traffic alone in that sense cannot be differentiated. Hence it is difficult to say and measure how much ROI a

company gets from such sites. So, as you mentioned, B2B content marketing online takes time and effort, their goals need to be measurable.

Group member 2:

I second to what E is asking. In fact, I have the same doubts in mine reading T's post. Website consists of web design, hosting and future maintenance. But how you would get traffic to you website (imagine - you own the company and need to marketing your B2B via website)? My point is website *Pro Se* should be promoted before it can play any role as B2B marketing social media.

I have some experience in creating website for start up (B2B). And it was more representative role - like who we are, what are we doing and so on.

Unfortunately, I can't participate in active discussion more since leaving abroad at the morning, but definitely will read your opinions and arguments about it later.

Group member 5:

Thanks E for your comments, these things are quite familiar to me and I should have explained them a little better for all of you as well.

Firstly, as the trigger said that the company website is managed externally, which means they have outsourced this to an external agency. So taking control, they would be doing this in-house, which would be cost effective since in my experience it takes more time to explain an agency to do something than do it yourself. Also if the company does it themselves, it reflects the company and brand better, since they know their business and the spirit of the brand is communicated better.

Lead generation can be actually measured quite easily, you could get the site visitors to sign up for a newsletter or some content on the website, such as white papers could only be accessed by signing up. As this company has a revolutionary product, it is in my opinion safe to assume that customers would be willing to give their contact info in an exchange for useful information. Then these contact details would be passed on to the sales and their development from leads to customers could be followed for example with a CRM system. I didn't really understand what you meant by this question: "do you refer to internal or external usage of website for lead generation?"

What is comes to ROI and social media, I think it's too narrow minded to focus on just ROI since it is often impossible to measure. As it said on the Mashable website, social media shouldn't always be tied to a metric; like any other marketing activity, ROI will not always be immediate. First and foremost, social media is a communication

tool, just as the telephone and email function as a way to have conversations with current and potential customers."

Hope this make this answers to your questions, I was trying to do this at the same time while getting kids ready to their school costume party and now I have to hurry and get to the office ☹

Keywords: social media, ROI, outsourcing

Source: <http://mashable.com/2013/02/13/roi-social-media/>

Group member 5:

Well E I think this is very simple, you get traffic to your website by making sure that the site is SEO optimized so that when the potential customers search terms related to company's on Google or Bing, by having a SEO optimized site you make sure your website ranks high and people will click on the link and they end up to your website - I think this is very basic stuff... You could also use Google Adwords or more cost effective Bing advertising to direct traffic to your website. And of course you will promote the website in all of your communication materials.

What do you mean with this? I am talking about company website, not really social media."My point is website *Pro Se* should be promoted before it can play any role as B2B marketing social media."

I am sorry; I really didn't get your point...

Group member 4:

Thanks for the clarification T. From your explanation, I gather you are actually referring to content control **only**. Which in any case is within the company control, freelancers do not do content. They can easily give access control to a company for web content, which means the cost incurred after the site is up and running would anyway be minimal unless they need to train the webmaster. But if they want full control, Web hosting and email, a domain name, and some aesthetic quality, it is most likely not feasible. Unless they are an ICT company.

Lead generation, B2B companies have tools to measure leads. It is not really about citing papers on website. Once a lead is identified, they go through the sales process with the buyer and supplier. The lead is ranked as well. Using a B2B website internally for generating leads means that your own employees regard the company product or ser-

vice portfolio to generate leads for customers. This is how B2B normally use webpages in relation to lead generation.

And I see that everyone is suddenly referring to TRIGGER all the time now, I believe the trigger was there for defining the problem and learning objectives, once those are defined, we should address them in our closing discussion. Not go back and discuss trigger again here.

I believe yesterday was the last day was it?

Group member 4:

T, regarding traffic, I think we're referring to traffic differentiation, not how much traffic comes to your site. At least I was talking about that in reference to your previous post. There is a difference between how many people come to your site and what they are doing at your site.

Group member 5:

The trigger is clearly talking about control of the content, since is't mentioned at the same sentence as other communication methods. "The company is using some traditional marketing tools, such as fairs and trade shows but does not have any online presence in the true sense. The company website is managed externally, and the company recently created a profile on LinkedIn." And yes, freelancers, such as ad agencies do also manage web content.

I was not talking about siting papers, I was meaning that you could collect high quality leads by proving interesting content and make them sign up -> then you will have the contact details and can pass them to sales for further follow up.

Yes, we are referring to the trigger because M suggested that we would make a plan for the company, and I was just replying to his plan. I think having an example that we all know makes the problem solving more easier than just posting theories and examples that are not all even related to the problem or the objectives.

Anyway, I think we are ready to finish this discussion and start celebrating Wappu - hope you all have a good one 😊

Group member 1:

First of all, we were referring to the company presented in the trigger as I suggested as to make this a bit more concrete by suggesting ways the company can gain brand recognition in cost efficient way.

As T has already quite well presented her view on which I agree, the company would take control of the development of the content. In my opinion as well it can be more cost efficient as well as the content could reflect more truly the company's views and opinions. Also I would disagree on E's comment that freelancers do not do content, how so? When reading the trigger you get the idea that the company's digital presence is really weak and until now the homepage is managed by an external partner and quite probably also the content is done by them. Anyway that is not the key issue ☹

Anyway I agree with T's comments and I don't have much to add there. Maybe it is now time to thank you all for really interesting discussion and wish you all really nice Vappu ☺

I will try to wrap up the discussion latest on Thursday!

Group member 4:

To clarify what I meant, to my knowledge content of a company website is always owned by the company, they dictate what they want to be shown there. Regardless of whom is handling the practicalities.

Group member 1:

I suppose it depends a bit how you read the trigger, but I would see that even though the company of course has the ownership of the content, they have not utilized the page fully in brand communication as the "company website is managed externally" and company "does not have any online presence in the true sense". And thus, taking the full control of the content development of the page is wiser and more cost efficient.

Group member 1:

Conclusion from DL

Our discussion problem was how to create brand recognition in B2B sector the most efficient way. We approached the problem through three learning objectives which in

addition to different theories we discussed also through a more concrete way of presenting ideas of how the company in the trigger could gain brand recognition with small budget.

In the first objective we tried to find out the main characteristics of B2B marketing communication and how it differs from B2C. The main difference found were

- target group (business professionals vs. consumers)
- Buyer behavior (task oriented vs. emotional)
- Buyer-Customer Relationship (personal vs. generic)
- Communications Channels (direct channels vs. mass media)

The main characteristics of B2B marketing communications were:

- Relationship driven
- Maximize the value of the relationship
- Small, focused target market
- Multi-step buying process, longer sales cycle
- Brand identity created on personal relationship
- Educational and awareness building activities
- Rational buying decision based on business value
- Sales cycle in the B2B is longer and more complex
- Not reaching as much customer as possible, but focusing on customer retention
- Customer loyalty management will enable customer retention
- Sales and marketing through "accounts"

The second objective was to find out which communication channels are the most important for B2B sector for brand development and how to use them the most cost efficient way. Digital outlets seem to be the most important communication channels for brand development. The most important online marketing communication channel is the company website. In the B2B sales cycle, online- and e-mail campaigns can be the first step towards a series of integrated connections that may include telemarketing and personal follow up by sales representatives. Also online newsletters, search engine advertising and social media solutions are becoming more and more important. In B2B marketing LinkedIn is a good source to get reliability. Also by blogging can increase

the knowledge of a brand and get visibility also by increasing visibility in search engines.

The third objective was to find out the role of social media for B2B companies in branding. Social media is still a very new concept for B2B marketing and quite important factors to be considered with social media are the challenges of getting proper data, measurements and reports which are important for B2B business. 64 percent of B2B companies are already invested in social media marketing, with Facebook and Twitter being the most preferred social network of these companies. Reasons for companies to invest in social media:

- social media facilitates customer acquisition and retention
- a good social media marketing strategy promotes credibility & professionalism of the brand
- it offers a tremendous potential for networking

And what do companies expect to gain from social media investments:

- creating brand awareness (83%)
- social sharing (56%)
- gaining trust and followers (55%)
- lead generation (32%)
- assessing market perception of their brand (16%)

Group 3



Brand Storytelling Drivers

Customer Stories

brand advocate

stories told through social media

stories told to share experiences

Purpose
The reasons to tell brand stories

Method
The channels of storytelling

Opportunity
when to tell brand stories

Brand Stories

strengthen positioning

stories told through paid and earned media

stories told to leverage events

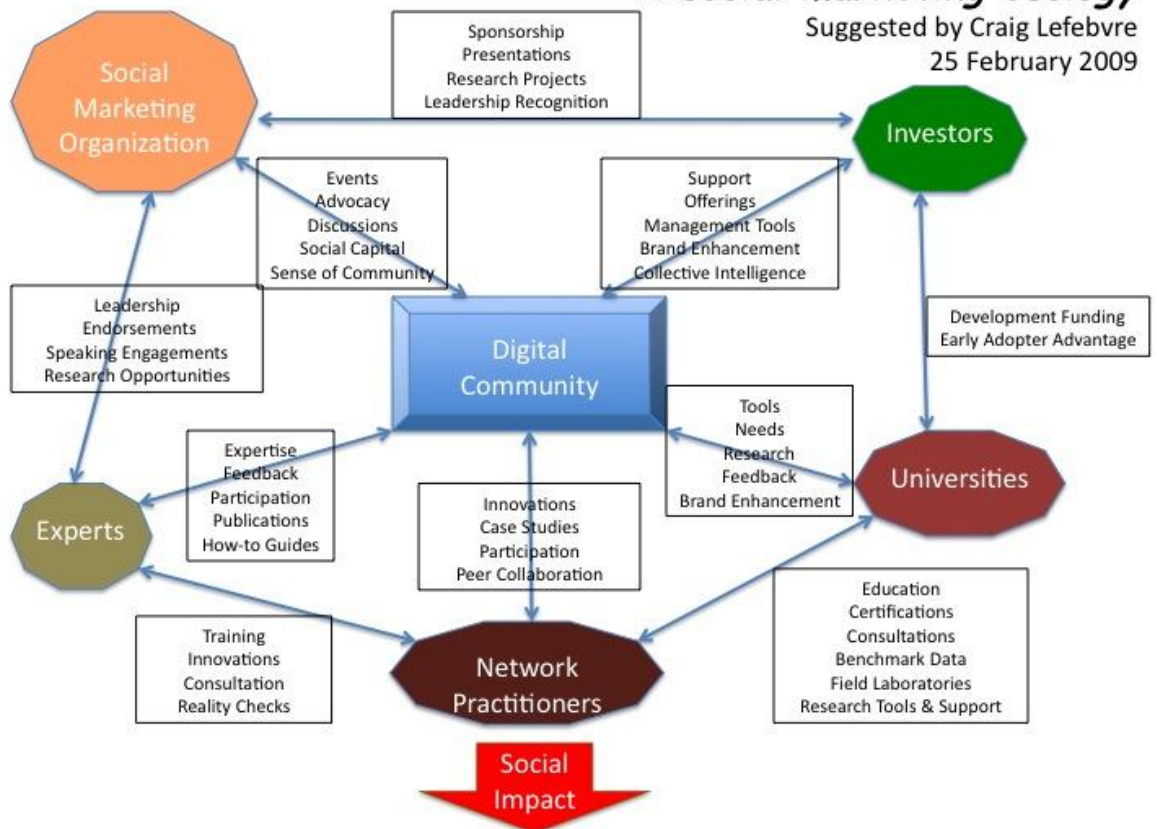
SOCIAL BRANDING



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A social marketing ecology

Suggested by Craig Lefebvre
25 February 2009



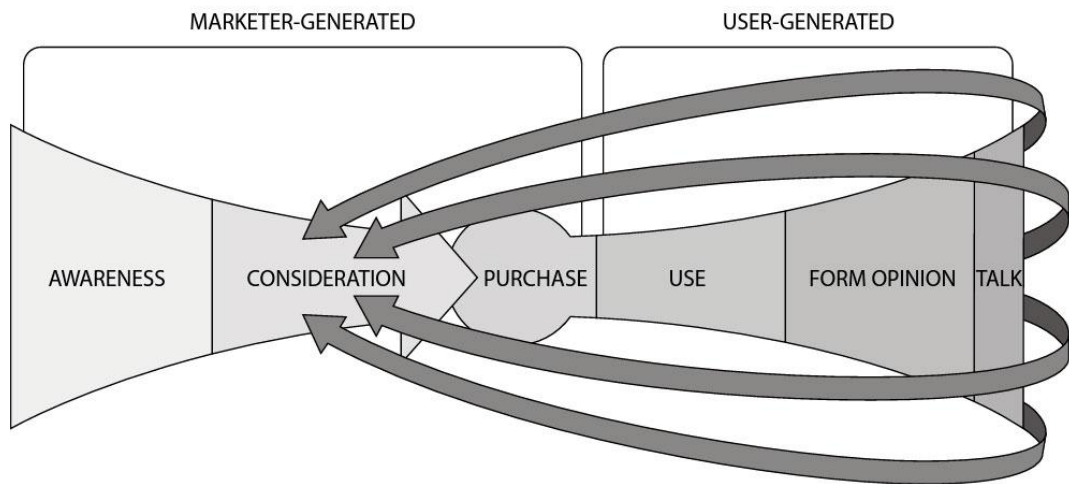
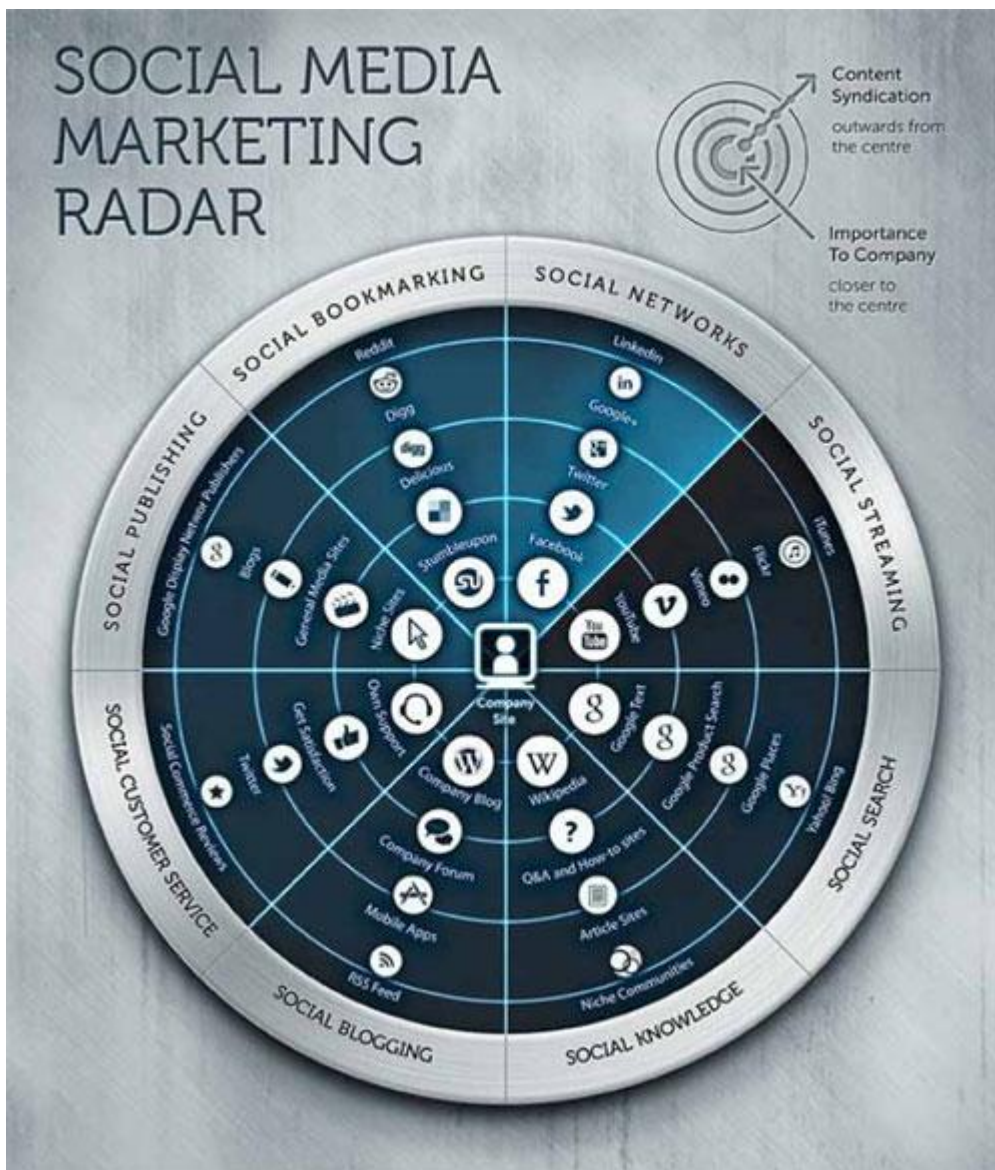
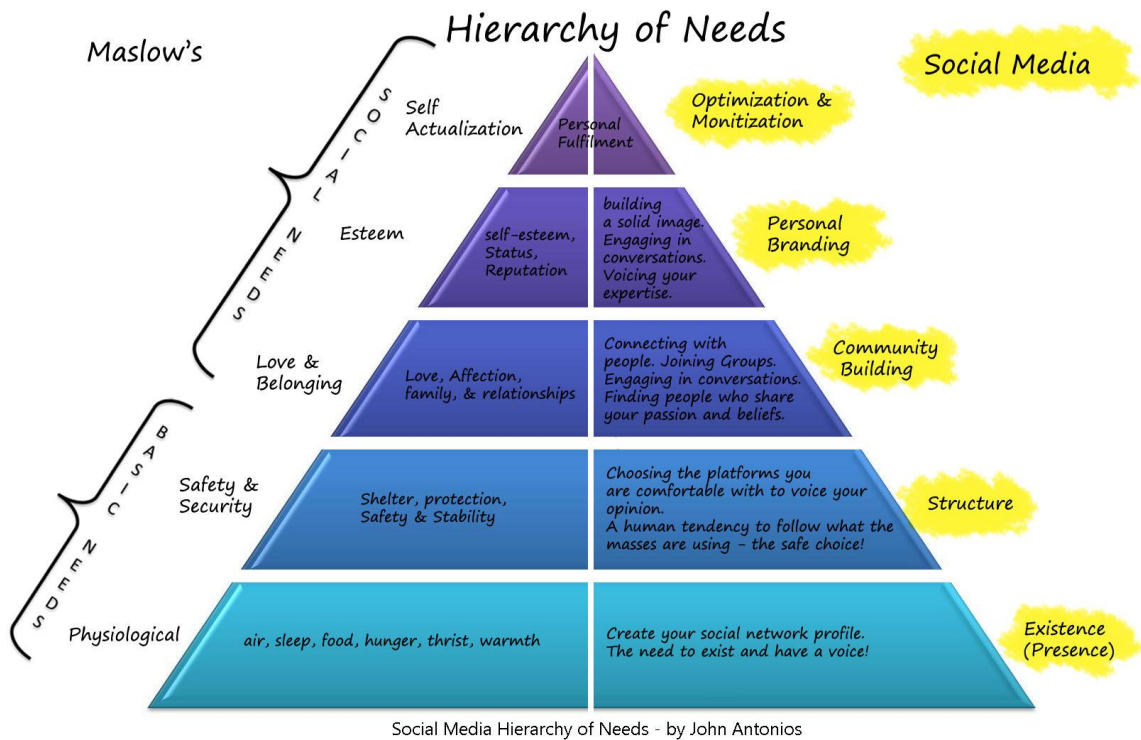


Figure 1.1 The Social Feedback Cycle

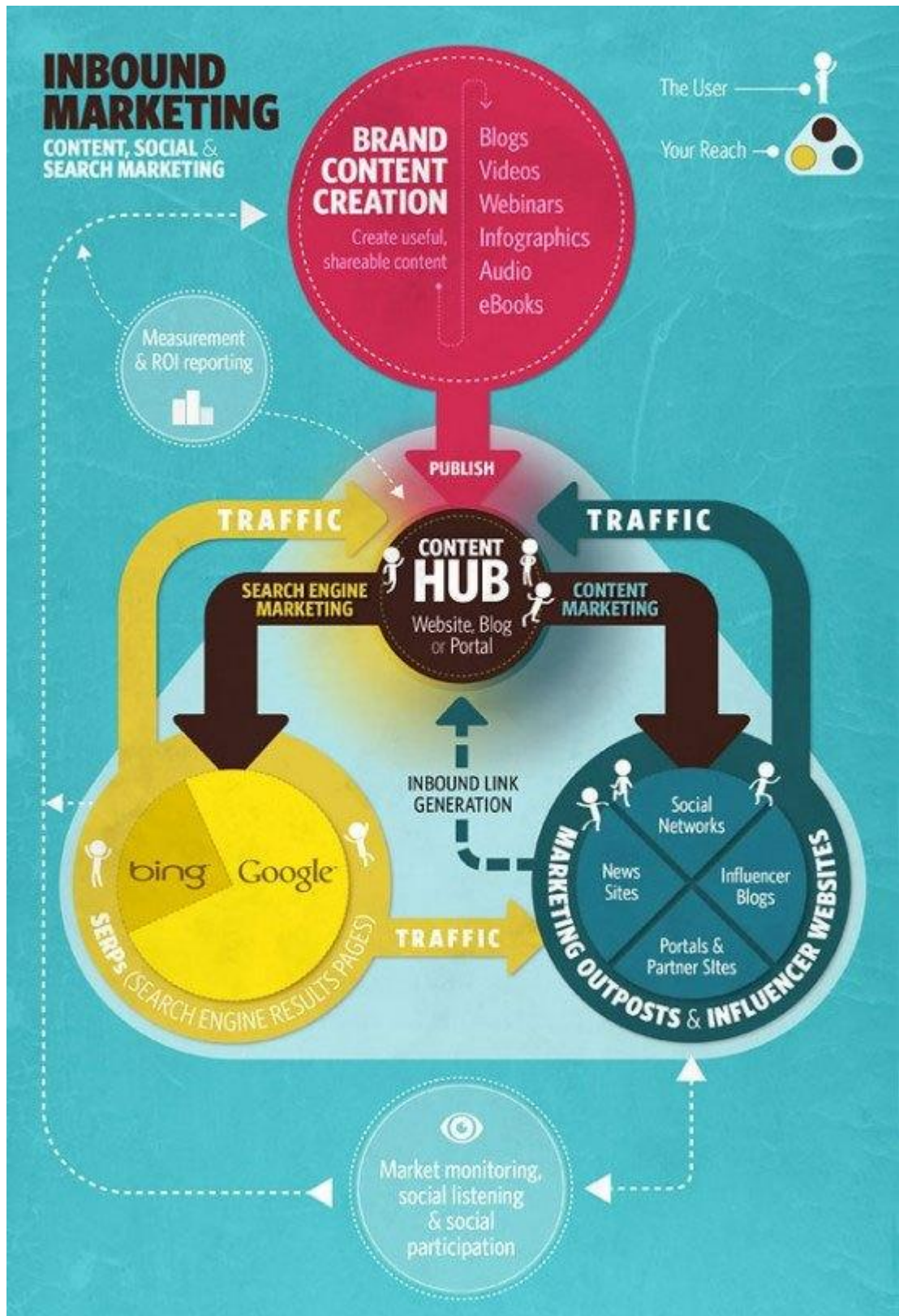


Objective	Touch Point	Details
Create business leads	Corporate blog	Link to contact details available and biggest change people will contact you for commercial information
Strengthen the emotional bond	Facebook	Organize open and wide-ranging forms of customer collaboration to increase involvement
Improve customer experience	Twitter	Most complaints and questions come through Twitter, so we focus on this channel for an optimum customer service
...



HOW PEOPLE USE SOCIAL MEDIA + as part of real life...






https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?v=4325847561962&set=6.42297221 Mikka

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help
Convert Select
Google Suggested Sites Web Slice Gallery

facebook



Mikka
Tykkää tästä sivusta · 7. tammikuuta sovittukasta
shoutit.com 48

Mikan matka alkaa

Mika-lehmin matka Suomeen alkaa, tyssätkö matka jo kertaalleen? Katso matkan alkumetri!

Tykkää · Kommentoi · Jaa

1 600 henkilöä tykkää tästä.
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Näytä aiemmat kommentit 0/142

- Jassi Absolutisti Kreivi ihana**
15. tammikuuta kello 13:42 · Tykkää
- Aito Kotikana** Mikan lehmin takia seuraan usein alppitajia nähdäkseen lehmin.
15. tammikuuta kello 13:00 · Tykkää · 2
- Marjo-Eliisa Andrejevoff** Ihanat Mikka, saanhan tulla vereesi koneessa 😊
18. tammikuuta kello 9:32 · Tykkää
- Nexha Nexa Hakaj** IhanaMikka
20. tammikuuta kello 0:15 · Tykkää
- Henna Strong** meidän tomonen sulaa levy :)
21. tammikuuta kello 18:34 · Tykkää
- Henna Strong** ~!~
22. tammikuuta kello 18:34 · Tykkää
- Vierota kommentit...

Attachment 10. Digital Marketing Strategy & Plan for Sofi Filtration eBook.

Contains buyer persona template and a branding check list. The eBook is attached as a pdf to this paper.

DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY



The digital environment has changed the way consumers interact with companies and brands throughout the purchasing process. Today consumers take their buying decision process online. They research, request information and evaluate a product before making the purchasing decisions. After the purchase is complete, clients usually continue to follow and engage with the brand. This is done by writing reviews, making recommendations online and to peers as well as directly interacting with the brand for support or after sales activities.

Regardless of the business you are in or the marketing strategy you plan to use you still need to understand the market and your audience. On top of that, as a brand you also need to be clear about your goals and objectives and how you plan to implement the digital tools available to you.

This digital marketing plan is designed for a one year cycle and it can be implemented and run along with the traditional annual marketing plan that you have crafted. Additionally, this plan can help you to evaluate where you stand and think about where you want to be at the same time next year.

Table of Contents

1. Goals	3
2. Branding	4
3. Buyer Persona	4
4. Website	5
5. Search Engine Optimization (SEO)	5
6. Email Marketing	6
7. Company Blog	8
8 . Social Media	9
9. Video Marketing	12
10. Pay Per Click (PPC)	13
11. Additional Actions	14
12. One Week Content Strategy Plan With Immediate Impact	15
13. Yearly Digital Marketing Schedule	17

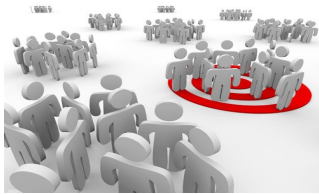
Appendix:

Branding check List

Buyer Persona Template

1. Goals

The following strategy will be centered around three main goals:



GENERATE TRAFFIC



**IMPROVE
AWARENESS**



INCREASE SALES

Each of these goals have different tools and tactics that can be assigned to them. The tools and strategies associated with each goal should not be viewed as belonging only to the goals assigned. There is an interrelationship between the goals themselves and the tools presented in this plan. For example, generating more traffic can lead to an increase in sales or improved brand awareness. Or, an increase in sales can lead to an increase in brand awareness. Hence these goals can be seen as working very tight together, almost as one goal which could be simply called business growth.

To ensure the success of every action in this plan, the participation of all Sofi Filtration's employees is required. This means that everybody is part of the digital landscape and contributes to the success of the strategy. As the company is fairly small, employee participation and involvement should not cause any difficulties.

2. Branding

Perform a branding check. This can be done in the beginning as well as at any stage of development. In fact it is important to re-evaluate the brand from time



to time to see if it aligns with the initial vision as well as with the current market situation. The attached

branding checklist can help identify the main branding elements for the company. Decide on the voice that will be reflected in all marketing communications. The

voice and attitude adopted in engaging the target audience can determine to certain degree, the success or failure in digital marketing. Once a voice has been chosen or decided upon, it is important to keep a high level of consistency across all channels and mediums.

3. Buyer personas

Creating a buyer persona will help Sofi Filtration define and segment its target audience. Additionally, a buyer's persona can significantly help in creating and delivering content for the target audience. The attached persona template can help in creating the first buyer persona. In time, as the company grows and expands internationally, additional personas can be created.

4. Website

A professional website is the single most important step towards Sofi Filtration's digital marketing plan. The website is the online business card of the company and hence it is important that it is up to date and consistent.. The company



website can be used as a platform or centre piece for all other digital activities. The company blog as well as links to social networks should be added to the website. It is important to remember the audience when developing content for the website.

5. Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Search engine optimization is tightly related to the company website as well as to the content the company creates and distributes. SEO is about making small, incremental changes to parts of the company website.



These small changes can be seen as insignificant when looked at individually, but combined can have a huge impact on the website performance in search engines.

Take Action!	
Objective	Higher ranking in organic search
Frequency	Quartely
Measurement	Quartely
Key Metrics	Keyword Click-Through Rate, search traffic performance, keyword ranking, conversions

6. Email marketing


The email is still one of the most powerful digital tool out there.

Communication with your audience can be achieved through a regular e-newsletter sent either once a month or on a quarterly basis. The newsletter can be customized and divided for each target group.

For example Sofi Filtration can divide its audience into several target focus groups:

- Sales agents and partners
- Existing customers
- Prospects.

Every group can be targeted with different content at different time. In fact it is recommended that with certain target groups the communication is kept on a regular basis. For example communication with the sales agents and partner target group can be kept on a monthly basis with updates and news. Existing customers and prospects can be targeted on a quarterly basis with product updates, company news as well as case studies and white papers. Using

newsletter and emailing software tools such as  MailChimp can give Sofi Filtration the necessary analytics to monitor and evaluate the engagement and effectiveness of its email marketing strategy. The quarterly newsletter should contain a fair amount of news and case studies or white papers so the reader can have a real benefit from the content. Additionally, rich media content such as video or info-graphics increase chance of action. It is

important that every newsletter has a "call to action" point. This can be as simple as "download our free white paper", "download our latest case study" or " watch out latest video". The content of the newsletter can be promoted on social media sites to encourage subscription rate.

Take Action!			
E-mail Marketing	Sales agents & Partners	Existing Customers	Prospects
Objective	Increase sales	Brand awareness	Lead generation
Frequency	Monthly	Quarterly	Quarterly
Measurement	Weekly	Monthly	Weekly
Key Metrics	Open rate, click rate, links clicked, subscribers with most open, bounce rate, unsubscribed.	Open rate, click rate, links clicked, subscribers with most open, bounce rate, unsubscribed.	Open rate, click rate, links clicked, subscribers with most open, bounce rate, unsubscribed.

7. Company Blog

The company blog is one of the best way to share Sofi Filtration's expertise and drive traffic to its website. The blog can be used and added directly on the



company website. Blog posts can be promoted and shared on

social media as well as on industry relevant website as a

guest post. As everyone needs content it never hurts to ask

popular and influential relevant industry blogs if they want

to post your blog post. At the same time offer them a guest

post on your blog. This will attract more traffic as well as it will

build brand awareness and trust. The average length of a blog post should be

between 500 and 700 words. The more succinct a blog post the higher are the

chances that visitors will spend their time to read it and even share or promote

it.

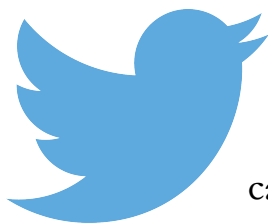
Take Action!	
Objective	Generate traffic, increase the #of social shares
Frequency	Monthly
Measurement	Monthly
Key metrics	Subscribers, #of posts, #of social shares, conversions

8. Social Media



Facebook was left out of the digital marketing study as this social media platform is not suitable for Sofi Filtration at this stage. However, it is recommended that, with company growth and increased social presence (blog, Twitter, etc), Sofi Filtration considers to open a Facebook company page. The goal of this page should be community building as well as establishing themselves as a reputable expert in industrial water filtration. Content about water treatment and water purification in general as well as specific cases can be posted here. Additionally, this will drive traffic to the company website as well as it can serve as a platform for content sharing and promotion. Product promotion on Facebook should be avoided until a solid community has been built. The post frequency can be decided at the moment of opening a Facebook account.

Twitter is an incredible tool for listening and for doing market research. You



can listen to your readers, find out what other companies/people are doing and saying as well as build a relationship with current and future readers. Ideally, the following activities should be performed by all company members or at least the ones involved in sales and marketing:

Take Action!

Join Twitter and make sure your profile is up to date

Follow the company page

Follow industry/group influencers on Twitter

Follow relevant companies

Subscribe to the relevant news hash (#) tags

Start commenting on relevant tweets from influencers and companies you follow.

Engage your target audience with company updates, company news, relevant industry articles, white papers and cases

Promote your content (blog, case studies, etc)



Listen, follow,
promote your
content

Take Action!

Objective	Listen, promote content, build reputation, generate traffic
Frequency	Weekly
Measurement	Weekly
Key metrics	Re-tweets, website traffic, followers, mentions, sales leads



LinkedIn is the most professional social network out there. By joining LinkedIn you can benefit from a variety of valuable information as well as from generating quality leads. Ideally, the following activities should be performed by all company members or at least the ones involved in sales and marketing:

Take Action!	
Join LinkedIn and make sure your profile is up to date	
Follow the company page	
Join all (or agreed upon) relevant industry specific groups	
Follow industry/group influencers on LinkedIn	
Follow relevant companies	
Start commenting on relevant posts in LinkedIn groups	
Start contributing to your target audience with company updates, company news, relevant industry articles, white papers and cases	
Promote own content (blog, case studies, etc)	

Take Action!	
Objectives	Brand awareness, sales leads, networking
Frequency	Weekly
Measurement	Weekly
Key metrics	Followers, discussions, leads, website traffic

9. Video marketing

Videos are a great way to spread out content. Sofi Filtration can create low cost videos from customer cases on a quarterly basis. This material could be then shared in the quarterly newsletter. In fact, a short video can be created for each customer case that the company decides to use as a marketing tool. In time professional videos can be commissioned to target a specific audience or to showcase filtration processes. Video content can be shared on social media sites as well as promoted on the company website. Do not forget to promote them on YouTube!



Take Action!

Objectives	Brand awareness, increase sales, drive trafic
Frequency	Quartely
Measurement	Monthly
Key metrics	Play rate, subscribers, playthrough rate, sharing

10. Pay per Click (PPC).

Open an AdWords account and set up several ads for the Sofi Filter and Sofi Filtration. Use Google AdWords keyword tools to search and choose for the most suitable keywords for your ads. Additionally, test these keywords and see



what ads and companies they bring up when looked up on Google. The ads can be designed for products and/or to direct traffic to the website and to the company blog. There can be

an ad for the Sofi Filter and there can be an ad for micro-filtration. Additionally, there can be an ad for the company itself, advertising the expertise instead of the product. Budget could start 105€/ month for a 21 work day advertising campaign. A 5€ daily advertising budget should be enough for the start and for experimenting with different ad types. Additionally, different ad groups for key markets could be created. For example, as Sofi Filtration has a partner in Austria, localized ads in German could cover the DACH region and could be optimized to work for that particular market area. Ads should run only during week days and business hours to avoid extra costs and clicks from users that accidentally click on the ad. Integrate AdWords with Analytics for a unified solution and for monitoring the digital activities.

Take Action!	
Objectives	Drive traffic, generate sales, promote content
Frequency	Monthly
Measurement	Monthly
Key metrics	Click through rate, conversions, cost per click, ad ranking

11. Additional actions

News Alerts

- Create news alerts for relevant industry specific news.
- Google alerts will deliver relevant news to your inbox.
- Filter the news/posts/comments and share it to agreed social media.
- Alternatively send the content to the digital marketing manager.

Discussion boards and forums

- Join Industry specific discussion boards and forums.
- Start commenting on relevant posts.
- Start your own discussions and ask questions.
- Ask questions that benefit the entire audience.

SlideShare

- All non-confidential presentations could be shared publicly on SlideShare.
- Every customer case that has name sharing permission can translate in a short presentation on SlideShare.
- This adds more content out there by which Sofi Filtration can be found in organic and paid search.

12. One week content strategy plan with immediate impact.

DAY ONE: PICK YOUR TARGET

Pick one potential buyer that you can use as a target for your content. Once you have defined the target, try to learn as much as possible about it. The main information you want to find out and understand, is what are the main pain points your target is experiencing right now.

DAY TWO: CREATE A PIECE OF CONTENT

Create a simple piece of content and include information that addresses some of the pain points of your target. The content should be simple and concise. Ideally, this can be done with a blog post. When writing the content, add a simple "call to action" or a goal for the target to follow.. Goals such as page views, brochure downloads or a requests for more information are simple and easy to measure.

DAY THREE: GET IN-HOUSE FEEDBACK

It is important that your piece of content has the highest impact on your target audience and hence you want to make sure that your opinion on the content is not biased. Share the content with co-workers and ask their opinion about the effectiveness of the written material. Make adjustments if needed.

**DAY FOUR:
LAUNCH &
DISTRIBUTE**

Publish the content on your website or company blog. Use all distributions channel to promote to content. Social media and even email marketing can help push the content to the right audience. Engage industry influencers, encourage redistribution and commenting.

**DAY FIVE:
MEASURE &
ANALYZE**

Now you can measure the impact and results of your efforts. Use Google Analytics to see how many users have visited your website and how many of your goals have been achieved. At the same time learn what you have done right or wrong. This will help in the future. The overall results might be small but this is just because of the short timeframe. In time when this action is repeated and the audience is already established, results will have a different meaning. Probably the most important thing in this one week exercise is that you learn about your target audience and about content creation.

13. Yearly Digital Marketing Schedule

The following monthly plan can be seen as a guideline and not a strict rule. Activities can be changed at will with new ones that arise on the go.

October 2014				
Tool	Week 41	Week 42	Week 43	Week 44
LinkedIn		Industry Q&A	Post industry relevant news	Technical news (case study/white paper)
Twitter		Industry Q&A	Post industry relevant news	Technical news (case study/white paper)
Blog				Case study/white paper
Website	New partner/sales agent news	Energia Messut Tampare		Case study/white paper)
Email marketing		Energia Messut Tampare	Partners & Sales Agents: product updates/cases	
PPC				Review keywords/ads
Analytics	Measure results/leads/traffic for Sept.			

November 2014				
Tool	Week 45	Week 46	Week 47	Week 48
LinkedIn		Company News	Post industry relevant news	New filter feature
Twitter	Energia Mesut feedback and results	Company News	Post industry relevant news	New filter feature
Blog				New filter feature
Website	Energia Mesut feedback and results	Company News		New filter feature
Email marketing				Partners & Sales Agents: product updates/cases
PPC				Review keywords/ads
Analytics	Measure results/leads/traffic for Oct.			

December 2014				
Tool	Week 49	Week 50	Week 51	Week 52-1
LinkedIn	Industry Q&A	Technical news (case study/white paper)	Post industry relevant news	X-mass and New year. Relax!
Twitter	Industry Q&A	Technical news (case study/white paper)	Post industry relevant news	X-mass and New year. Relax!
Blog		Case study/white paper		X-mass and New year. Relax!
Website		Case study/white paper)		X-mass and New year. Relax!
Email marketing			Quarterly Newsletter-Season greetings	X-mass and New year. Relax!
PPC				Review keywords/ads
Analytics	Measure results/leads/traffic for Nov.			

January 2015				
Tool	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5
LinkedIn	Scout for influencers/ follow people	Review the marketing strategy for 2015	Establish Brand Messaging	New filter feature
Twitter	Scout for influencers/ follow people	Review of the marketing strategy for 2015	Establish Brand Messaging	New filter feature
Blog	Scout for influencers	Review of the marketing strategy for 2015	Establish Brand Messaging	New filter feature
Website		Review of the marketing strategy for 2015	Establish Brand Messaging	New filter feature
Email marketing			Establish Brand Messaging	Partners & Sales Agents: product updates/cases
PPC			Establish Brand Messaging	Review keywords/ads
Analytics	Measure results/leads/ traffic for Dec.			

February 2015				
Tool	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9
LinkedIn	Like/share/comment on articles/posts	Benchmark against competition	Post industry relevant news	Technical news (case study/white paper)
Twitter	Likes/retweet/comment/follow	Benchmark against competition	Post industry relevant news	Technical news (case study/white paper)
Blog	Follow influencers	Benchmark against competition		Case study/white paper
Website		Benchmark against competition		Case study/white paper)
Email marketing		Improve Email Templates		Partners & Sales Agents: product updates/cases
PPC		Benchmark against competition		Review keywords/ads
Analytics	Measure results/leads/traffic for Jan.			

March 2015				
Tool	Week 10	Week 11	Week 12	Week 13-14
LinkedIn	Like/share/comment on articles/posts	SlideShare presentations	Promote company video	New filter feature
Twitter	Likes/retweet/comment/follow	SlideShare presentations	Promote company video	New filter feature
Blog	Comment/re-share influencers		Infographic	New filter feature
Website	SEO		New Video	New filter feature
Email marketing			Quarterly Newsletter-All	
PPC				Review keywords/ads
Video			New Video	
Analytics	Measure results/leads/traffic for Feb.			

April 2015				
Tool	Week 15	Week 16	Week 17	Week 18
LinkedIn	Call for Sales Agents	Post industry relevant news	Like/share/comment on articles/posts	Opinion on industry relevant topic
Twitter	Call for Sales Agents	Post industry relevant news	Like/retweet/comment	Promote own blog
Blog			Invite a guest writer	Opinion on industry relevant topic
Website	Landing page for Call for Sales Agents			
Email marketing				Partners & Sales Agents: product updates/cases
PPC				Review keywords/ads
Analytics	Measure results/leads/traffic for Mar.			

May 2015				
Tool	Week 19	Week 20	Week 21	Week 22
LinkedIn	Announce new sales agents and partners	Like/share/comment on articles/posts	Connect with new people	Environment related post
Twitter	Announce new sales agents and partners	Likes/retweet/comment	Follow new influencers/companies/magazines	Promote own blog
Blog				Environment related post
Website	Announce new sales agents and partners			
Email marketing				Promotional Email, Topic: TBD
PPC				Review keywords/ads
Analytics	Measure results/leads/traffic for Apr.			

June 2015				
Tool	Week 23	Week 24	Week 25	Week 26-27
LinkedIn	Qualify leads	Trade Show	Promote new video	Join new relevant groups
Twitter	Benchmark against competition	Trade Show	Promote new video	Follow competition
Blog		Infographic		
Website	SEO	Trade Show	New video	
Email marketing				Quarterly Newsletter-All
PPC				Review keywords/ads
Video			New video	
Analytics	Measure results/leads/traffic for May.			

July 2015				
Tool	Week 28	Week 29	Week 30	Week 31
LinkedIn	Campaign TBD	Like/share/ comment on articles/posts	Q&A	Promote SlideShare presentation
Twitter	Likes/retweet/ comment	Likes/retweet/ comment	Q&A	Promote SlideShare presentation
Blog				6 months review post
Website	Improve Info and Web Content			
Email marketing				Partners & Sales Agents: product updates/cases
PPC				Review keywords/ads
Analytics	Measure results/leads/ traffic for Jun.			

August 2015				
Tool	Week 32	Week 33	Week 34	Week 35-36
LinkedIn	Promotion(Free sample testing& free consulting)	6 months review. Improve message	Post industry relevant news	Like/share/comment on articles/posts
Twitter	Promotion(Free sample testing& free consulting)	6 months review. Improve message	SlideShare presentations	Likes/retweet/comment
Blog	Water & Solids types			
Website	Landing page for promotion		Performance & content review	
Email marketing	Promotion email			
PPC				Review keywords/ads 6 months review
Analytics	Measure results/leads/traffic for Jul.& 6 months			

September 2015				
Tool	Week 37	Week 38	Week 39	Week 40
LinkedIn	New filter feature/ Infographic	Like/share/ comment on articles/posts	Promote new video	Like/share/ comment on articles/posts
Twitter	New filter feature/ Infographic	Likes/retweet/ comment	Promote new video	Likes/retweet/ comment
Blog	New filter feature/ Infographic			
Website	New filter feature/ Infographic			SEO
Email marketing			Quarterly Newsletter-All	
PPC				Review keywords/ads
Video			New video	
Analytics	Measure results/leads/ traffic for Aug.			

October 2015				
Tool	Week 41	Week 42	Week 43	Week 44
LinkedIn	Call for Sales Agents	Trade show promotion	Q&A environment	Like/share/comment on articles/posts
Twitter	Call for Sales Agents	Trade show promotion	Q&A environment	Likes/retweet/comment
Blog	New technology topic			
Website	Trade Show landing page			
Email marketing	Trade show invitations			
PPC				Review keywords/ads
Analytics	Measure results/leads/traffic for Sept.			

November 2015				
Tool	Week 45	Week 46	Week 47	Week 48
LinkedIn	Survey. Topic TBD.	Technical news (case study/white paper)	Like/share/comment on articles/posts	Update company page
Twitter	Survey. Topic TBD.	Technical news (case study/white paper)	Likes/retweet/comment	Update company page
Blog		Case study/white paper		
Website		Case study/white paper)		Update company page
Email marketing	Survey. Topic TBD.			Partners & Sales Agents: product updates/cases
PPC				Review keywords/ads
Analytics	Measure results/leads/traffic for Oct.			

December 2015				
Tool	Week 49	Week 50	Week 51	Week 52
LinkedIn	Q&A Technology	New filter feature/ Infographic	Like/share/ comment on articles/posts	X-mass and New year
Twitter	Q&A Technology	New filter feature/ Infographic	Likes/retweet/ comment	X-mass and New year
Blog		New filter feature/ Infographic		X-mass and New year
Website	SEO	New filter feature/ Infographic		X-mass and New year
Email marketing			Season greeting mass email to All	X-mass and New year
PPC				Review keywords/ads
Analytics	Measure results/leads/ traffic for Nov.			

Branding Checklist

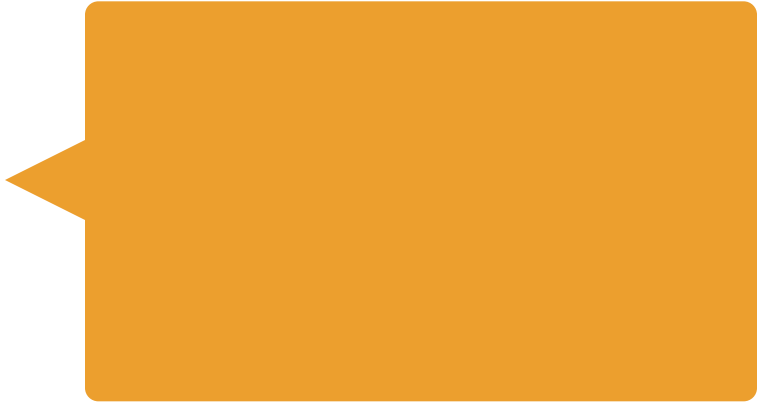
A brand is a "promise" and when done right, branding can make a business more profitable, credible and memorable. Furthermore, it can make the company behind the brand to stand out from the competition. The main elements of a brand are: the product or service, the logo, the employees, the website and all other characteristic that help creating, visualizing and marketing a brand.

The Sofi brand should include all of the aspects that make up its business. The following checklist can serve as a guide and can be used to at any give point in time. This checklist is general, basic and can be applied to other industries and companies too. However, it is designed to fit small and medium enterprises and should serve as a guide when defining one's brand.

The branding process starts by identifying and defining the unique character of your business.

Define your brand

What is the focus of your company? What products or services do you offer?

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What is the personality of your company? (See Activity 1 below).

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Who is your ideal target group or market? What are the demographics? What are their interests?

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Branding Checklist

What is your value proposition? How do you differentiate? What makes you better than your competition? (See Activity 2)



Create your Brand

- Choose your company name – ensure that it is unique and reflects your business, has an available Internet domain name, is meaningful for your target market and is easy to remember.
- Develop a great tagline/ mission statement. A tagline shows to your customers who you are and what you stand for in just a few short words.
- Choose the company colors. Color affects the image of the company and the customer's motivation to buy. For example: red is passionate, dark blue represents strength and is good for business, yellow denotes happiness. Some research is recommended in order to choose the right colors for the brand.
- Have a professionally designed logo. The logo should be unique, memorable and simple. Furthermore, it should work well in all sizes and applications as well as in the basic colors: black and white.

Branding Checklist

Live your Brand

- Adopt your brand internally – make sure the entire team understands your brand when interacting with clients and with each other.
- Always promote your brand with consistency – use it in every aspect of your communications with your customers and prospects.

The following activities can help a company to define its brand. Designing or revising a brand does not always need to be expensive. A company needs to know what its brand stands for and what makes it unique. The following two exercises are designed to help the company to gain clarity and insights into its brand.

Branding Activities

#1 Activity: Messaging

The exercise can be started by answering the following questions as honest and objective as possible. This will help the company to better understand its existence in relation to its target market/customer..

Write down a list of words that best describe your company. For example: reliable, innovative, creative, environmental friendly....

1. Put on a piece of paper as many words as you can think of that best describes your company
2. Create two columns once the first step is done and a fair amount of words is found.
 - A. In one column place the words that best describe your business
 - B. In the other column place the words that describe how your company differentiates itself from competitors
3. Rank the words that describe your BEST in each column.

The result of this of this exercise is: you have prioritized the messaging that the brand should communicate to all stake holders.

#2 Activity: Positioning

In this exercise the company takes a good look at how its competition presents itself to the market. For Ex: higher quality, more choices, faster, economical, environmental friendly, low Co2?

1. Put your competitors' tagline and logos on a piece of paper.
2. Evaluate their strengths and weaknesses and think about them.
3. Think and establish how the details of your brand (logo, tagline, name, etc.) can claim a strong and high position in the mind of your customers and target market.

The result of this exercise: You have a clear vision on how to position your brand's logo and messaging in order to differentiate your company from the competition.

Buyer Persona Template

Buyer Persona Creation Template

PERSONA NAME	
BACKGROUND (ex: Job, Careers, Title, Family)	
DEMOGRAPHICS (ex: Age, Sex, Location, Income, etc)	
IDENTIFIERS (ex: Demeanors, Communication Preferences, etc.)	

Buyer Persona Template

PERSONA NAME	
GOALS (ex: Primary and Secondary Goals of our Persona)	
CHALLENGES (ex: Primary and Secondary Challenges for our Persona)	
WHAT CAN WE DO TO... ...to help our persona reach their goals and overcome their challenges?	

Buyer Persona Template

PERSONA NAME	
MOST COMMON OBJECTIONS (ex: Why don't they buy our product/service?)	
OUR MARKETING MESSAGING (ex: Value proposition, benefits, etc)	
OUR ELEVATOR PITCH	