

THE MANSFIELD AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

GROW YOUR BUSINESS

BUSINESS

START WITH YOUR WEBSITE



It's All About Marketing



Nailing your strategy is vital for growing your business in 2021. There are currently almost 4.57 billion active internet users worldwide, with 300 million of those digital diehards based in the United States.

I don't want to assume we're using the same definition for content marketing. My definition of content marketing goes something like this: the process of creating valuable pieces of content as a way to educate others and eventually do business with those people.

Here's a specific example: Maybe you sell a bread-making machine. So your company creates content that educates people on bread making—and maybe info about how bread making works and information on the best kinds of bread.

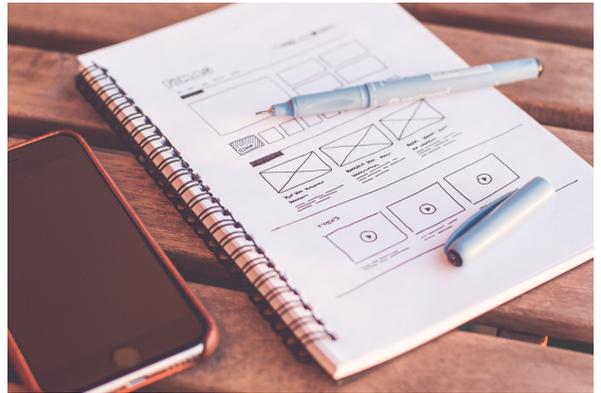
You also write articles on the best types of cheese to melt over your bread, and produce videos on making bread for sandwiches. People learn from you, and after they trust you as a credible source, a percentage of those people buy your bread-making machine. This is content marketing.

Before you decide which platforms you should create on - start with your website!

Except in very few cases, the center of your spider web is always going to be a centralized website. For most businesses, it's the nexus where everything happens (exceptions might be direct selling via landing pages or direct from social ads or similar).

If you're going to get an order online, for example, it will happen on your website. If someone's going to pay to consult with you, they'll book on your website. Maybe they're going to pick up the phone and call you, or send you an email and contact you online to do business. Chances are, they're doing so from your website. If not, I can guarantee they've at least been to your website to do their preliminary research on your brand before reaching out.

Build a Powerful Website



In the 90's your business website worked as a brochure. The brochure showed your logo, your name, your phone number, and maybe your email address. Perhaps your website had a low-resolution photo of your team or building and a brief description of your services.

Today, your website should do much more. Your website is a spoke in your marketing strategy and must offer a lot more for visitors not only informing them, but encouraging them to take action: buy, learn, contact. Does your website do that?

Why Design for Marketing

In the Internet's early days, your customers wouldn't necessarily go there first to find you. Today, if someone is looking for your business, if you're not online, you don't exist. That's true for both B2B and B2C companies.

According to Hubspot, 63 percent of businesses said getting traffic and leads was their top marketing challenge. Marketing is the process of getting your name out there to generate traffic and leads. Not only must you have a website, but customers expect to find useful information on it.

- Half of online sales are lost when visitors can't find the content they need or want.
- About 91 percent of customers are affected enough by their online experience that they visited a store because of it.
- About 37 percent of people rely on the Internet to find a store monthly.
- According to Google, 68 percent of consumers who searched on their smartphone go to a store within 24 hours. About half of those purchase within a day.

Designing for marketing shouldn't just be a reaction to some statistics. Your advertising campaigns or social media accounts often point back to your website. If you send direct mail, create a TV ad, or write a piece of content, it all ties with the website. The website serves as the focus around which your other marketing takes place.

How to Design for Marketing

If you're ready to take your website to the next level, here are some ways to make it function as a marketing tool.

- 1. Make it attractive.** Ugly websites send customers bouncing back to the results page. Remember that your website is part of your brand and says something about your company, its standards, its professionalism. What do you want it to say? (Read about minimalist design.)
- 2. Start with your customer in mind.** Forget what the design committee wants. What does your customer need and want from a website? Create a persona for him or her, with a name, description, personality traits, income, education, and everything else you know about your average buyer. This persona is a conglomeration of your typical customers and should be the forefront of your content and other marketing efforts. Write for this person. Design for this person.
- 3. Communicate simply.** Your website is communicating with customers. Make the communication concise and easy to understand. Remove jargon and anything that may distract the visitor from the goal of buying or contacting you to purchase. Give them what they want. Don't force your customers to hunt for answers to fundamental questions such as: Where are you located? What is your phone number? What if I have a problem? How does your service or product work? This information should be easily accessible.
- 4. Encourage action.** Every page of your website should contain a call to action. Your CTA may vary based on your type of business. For example, an e-commerce store will encourage visitors to buy, while a B2B will encourage potential customers to either sign up for the service or contact them. We can discuss the various qualities of pop-ups versus other options, but whatever style you choose, you must have something telling a customer what you want them to do.
- 5. Give away something valuable.** Many B2Bs will find it useful to give away information or content in exchange for an email address. That gives your sales team a warm lead for later follow up or for your email drip campaign.
- 6. Think mobile first.** More than half of your customers are using mobile devices to find you, and that number is only going up. In some industries, it's far higher. Make sure your website caters to small screens. (This is also critical for Search Engine Optimization.)
- 7. Stay fresh.** A website is never done. Refresh website photos once a year. Your SEO team should keep an eye out for broken links. Add useful content as you can.

SEO - Search Engine Optimization

If doling out cash to appear at the top of search results isn't your style, search engine optimization (SEO) might be a better fit. Your customers may prefer you for it: 70-80% of internet users say they ignore paid ads and prefer clicking on organic search results.

SEO will help your web pages appear higher in search engine results. With the right keywords, it will increase visibility and traffic from your target audience. For effective SEO, you'll need strong landing pages and smart web design. You can put in the work yourself, or hire an SEO specialist to keep content relevant and fresh.

Here's how to make SEO work for you as an online marketing strategy:

Keyword/Topic research

When potential customers use search engines, they use keywords to find relevant businesses. If your site doesn't have those keywords, then it won't appear in search results. If it has the right keywords but they don't appear often enough or aren't tagged, the site will appear too low on search results to be seen.

Google Analytics and Google Keyword Planner are great marketing tools to use here. They'll help you identify keywords and analyze how well your site uses them compared to your competitors.

On-page optimizations

The visible content on your web pages is extremely important for SEO. Good content meets customer demand and is linkable so that other pages can link to it and increase your page rankings. Title tags and URLs should also meet keyword, format, and length optimization standards. Image alt text should include the page subject. Even little things, like linking back to the homepage with a clickable logo, increase on-page SEO.

SEO - Search Engine Optimization

Technical optimizations

Technical optimizations include less visible, but equally important factors that satisfy web crawlers. Site maps, indexing, and site speed all contribute to a page's search results ranking. Many tools exist to measure and optimize pages for things like accelerated mobile pages, JavaScript indexing, meta tags, and rich snippets.

Off-page/inbound linking

Off-page/inbound linking, or backlinking, increases your page's authority. If your content is good enough for other content creators to link to it, that improves your ranking.

Not all links have to come from content creators, however. Brand mentions, guest blogging, social media marketing, and influencer marketing all help increase SEO from off the page. If your business appears on review sites like Yelp or TripAdvisor, or offers insights on Quora and Medium, that online presence bolsters the credibility of your site.

Over 90% of online experiences begin with a search engine.

Content Marketing

Good content does more than just improve SEO. Content marketing centers around creating valuable content—written, video, audio, images, infographics, and more—for your target audience. Creating content that is relevant to your potential customers is a highly effective online marketing strategy—that’s why 70% of marketers are actively investing in content marketing.

Blog/Resources

Eighty-six percent of companies produce blog content compared to other formats, HubSpot reports. Long-form content like blog posts, whitepapers, and case studies all provide your potential customers with something they want: information. Even existing customers can benefit from troubleshooting or FAQ content, which increases traffic and keyword presence on your site. Written content presents an opportunity to encourage purchases or signups for your product or service.

Blogging and other written content is a long-term marketing strategy. A brand needs a consistent presence over time to establish authority. Until then, potential customers may have a hard time finding your content (which is why SEO is important). With high-quality content, however, you can eventually attract a large audience that regards your brand as an industry leader.

Linkable content

We talked a little about linkable content in regards to SEO, but it’s important for other reasons as well. When another website links to content on your site like ebooks, reports, or infographics, it boosts your online credibility. To double down on this, consider creating well-written press releases for major brand announcements. If media outlets pick it up and link it, you’re well on your way to industry recognition.

Content Marketing

Guest posting

Guest posting takes the backlinking-and-authority-building benefits of Quora and Medium directly to your niche. Reach out to other bloggers in your industry to find out if you can write a guest post on their blog or site. If other industry experts consider your insights worthy of including on their site, that boosts your authority.

Podcasting

Fifty-five percent of the U.S. population has listened to a podcast, and the number is growing. With podcasts available for everything from storytelling to political analysis, podcasting has something for everyone.

Not sure what to include in a podcast? Record interviews with people in your organization or who work with it. Discuss current events in your industry. Alternately, keep things easy and record blog posts as podcast episodes. There are many software options available that will publish your audio content across multiple podcast platforms.

Video

As of 2020, video has overtaken blogs and infographics to become the most commonly used format in content marketing.

One of the best ways to leverage video marketing is to create video tutorials about your product or service. YouTube how-to channels can be extremely successful when done well, and the platform's parent company, Google, ensures that high-quality, relevant videos show up in search results. Alternately, Facebook and other social media platforms have popular Live video options.

To make the most of video tutorials, be sure to show your ideal audience something they want to see. Videos should be accessible to your audience and boost their confidence in your expertise. Use keywords in the video title and description, and link to your site or related content you've provided. You can also embed YouTube videos on your website. This will increase views and reduce your site's load time (compared to hosting the video on your site).

Conclusion

SEO Statistics Digital marketers know that Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is one of the most important investments to grow your business online and when done correctly, it can cost very little (besides your time) so you can use your marketing budget for things like ad spend. To many, SEO is an art form that combines content creation, branding, and promotion to bring highly qualified visitors to your website naturally via a search engine. And these statistics show exactly why SEO is so important.

- 72% of online marketers describe content creation as their most effective SEO tactic. (isitwp)
- Google receives over 77,000 searches per second. (Internet Live Stats)
- 67% of clicks go to the first 5 results displayed in search engines. (Advanced Web Ranking)
- 90% of web pages get zero organic traffic from Google. (Databox)
- 50% of search queries are 4 words or more. (Propecta)
- 12% of search queries have a Featured Snippet box on Google. (Ahrefs)

Thanks to the age of digital, having an online presence is no longer an optional extra but a very real necessity. The steps I've outlined here should give you a good idea of the powerful potential that your website represents.

The only question that should remain after having gone through this guide is role you wish your website to play in the success of your business.

Your Marketing Message Matters

YOUR WEBSITE SHOULD BE A SALES MACHINE.

“The biggest mistake clients make when it comes to websites is making them too complicated. Most businesses need website that serves a single purpose: it creates sales. Creating sales may not be the main reason you are in business, but it is the main reason you will stay in business. Your website should be a sales machine.”

- Donald Miller

10 of the best branding books to read this year

1. Building a StoryBrand: Clarify Your Message So Customers Will Listen

Author: Donald Miller

Why should you read this book? In this book, the New York Times best-selling author Donald Miller explains the key elements of powerful stories. The goal: to help you transform the way you talk about who you are, what you really do, and the unique value you bring to your customers and others.

The author's process helps you see the seven universal story points all humans respond to, the reason customers make purchases, how to create a simple brand message, and how to create persuasive messaging for your digital presence.

2. Branding: In Five and a Half Steps

Author: Michael Johnson

Why should you read this book? In this book, you'll learn how to create a successful brand using "contemporary brand identities as prototypes." The author is one of the world's leading graphic designers and brand consultant, helping many companies re-brand such as Virgin Atlantic.

The author "strips down" brands into their basic components to show us why we select one product or service over another.

Using case studies, he shows how little subtle influences make a big difference and explains how hidden elements can create a successful brand. With more than 1,000 vibrant illustrations, the book explores the process required for creating simple yet compelling brands.

3. Designing Brand Identity: An Essential Guide for the Whole Branding Team

Author: Alina Wheeler

Why should you read this book? In this book, you'll learn why this book is such a good resource if you are responsible for your company's branding and you need to educate your employees about the fundamentals of a designing a brand identity.

10 of the best branding books to read this year

4. Brand Identity Breakthrough: How to Craft Your Company's Unique Story to Make Your Products Irresistible

Author: Gregory V. Diehl

Why should you read this book? In this book, you'll learn how to tell your company's story. From when you first open your doors to new products and services releases, you are creating a niche in your industry. Your brand identity matters a lot because it helps you stand out from the crowd.

The author shows you how to develop a strong brand identity by combining your personality and values with the functionality of your products.

You'll learn how to incorporate a unique selling proposition into your branding, how to use storytelling to sell more and how to sell more of your products and services by becoming an irreplaceable brand.

5. The 22 Immutable Laws of Branding

Authors: Al Ries and Laura Ries

Why should you read this book? This book has become a marketing classic. This new version includes new commentary, new illustrations, and a bonus book: The 11 Immutable Laws of Internet Branding. This book shows how some of the best brands in the world such as Rolex, Volvo, and Heineken stand out in today's crowded marketplace.

With step-by-step instructions, you'll learn how to brand on the Internet. This book will help your company become a category-dominating, world-class brand.

10 of the best branding books to read this year

6. Build Your Brand Mania: How to Transform Yourself Into an Authoritative Brand That Will Attract Your Ideal Customers

Author: Matt Bertram

Why should you read this book? In this book, you'll learn how your company can become a "trusted advisor" in your industry that gains mindshare with your ideal customers and prospects.

The author – a trainer, speaker, and consultant – shows how he has personally helped hundreds of clients and entrepreneurs how to understand the science behind credibility, the hidden concepts behind affinity audiences, and why the "celebrity effect" is so important.

This book provides a blueprint to creating the reputation you want others to see online about your company and how to build authority using some of the best tools, platforms, and resources available today.

7. Branding For Dummies

Author: Bill Chiaravalle

Why should you read this book? In this book, you'll learn how brands are created, managed, differentiated, and licensed. This book provides you with the "nuts and bolts" to create a successful brand.

This book will help you create your company's mission statement, learn how your customers and prospects think of your brand, and what qualities you want them to associate with you.

Created to speak to you in "plain English," you get step-by-step instructions for how to position your brand, handle advertising and promotions, and keep your brand viable and visible. This book will give you a wide range of branding advice from help on how to develop a logo and tagline, to social media's impact on branding programs, to how to avoid brand crises.

10 of the best branding books to read this year

8. Sticky Branding: 12.5 Principles to Stand Out, Attract Customers & Grow an Incredible Brand

Author: Jeremy Miller

Why should you read this book? In this book, you'll learn how to create a "sticky brand" in your industry. Learning from companies such as Apple, Nike, and Starbucks, you'll see how they became successful. But you don't have to be a big brand to stand out as long as you challenge current norms and find innovative ways to serve your customers.

Based on tons of research on what makes brands successful, this book has become a playbook for branding with ideas, stories, and exercises to make your brand stand out.

By providing a unique "12.5" principles, you'll gain insights from how CEOs and business owners excelled in their industries and grow their brands.

9. How to Launch a Brand: Your Step-by-Step Guide to Crafting a Brand: From Positioning to Naming And Brand Identity

Author: Fabian Geyrhalter

Why should you read this book? In this book, you'll learn how to build a brand from the ground up from how to create a brand platform to how to create the different branding touch points.

This book will show you the importance of design as it relates to the success of your brand. This book will teach you how to launch your brand by design with practical advice on how to make the "right" branding decisions along the way from the ideation phase to the harsh realities of a real and tangible brand.

With expert insights based on two decades of professional experience transforming new product and service ventures, the author breaks down the key phases of preparing for a brand launch.

10 of the best branding books to read this year

10. The Brand Gap: How to Bridge the Distance Between Business Strategy and Design

Author: Marty Neumeier

Why should you read this book? In this book, you'll learn the theory of "brand building" and how to produce a "charismatic brand." This book will show you how a brand can become an essential part of their lives.

You'll the new definition of a brand, the key disciplines of brand building, the three most powerful questions to ask about any brand, and how brand design determines a customer's experience.

With tons of ideas in a relatively small amount of pages, the author shows how companies "bridge the gap" between brand strategy and customer experience. This book takes a strategic and creative approach to branding.