13 STRATEGIES
TO MARKET YOUR
# DIGITAL
CONTENT

INTRODUCTION

We all know how important digital communications are to a firm's overall marketing strategy. For professional services firms, an online precense is essential to reach buyers, partners, and employees in the internet age. A company's website is its virtual storefront, and the foundation to showcase your expertise and industry leadership online.

Having a website alone isn't the key to great results. Instead, it's the ability turn amplify your content through digital channels - email newsletters, social media, blogging. And to provide a variety of content to provide INFORMATION, ANALYSIS, ASSISTANCE OR ENTERTAINMENT. As the foundation of your digital strategy, and the main source of content publishing, your website has a hefty goal and it needs to wear many hats. A website needs to not just exist, it needs to perform. It needs to attract visitors, educate them and convince them to buy. But I know what you're thinking - easier said than done.

Creating high-quality, sharable, educational or entertaining content is the catalyst for getting your website found, building an audience, and growing leads. This content can be used throughout your digital and traditional platforms to showcase your firm's 4 Ps - People, Portfolio, Process, and Postion.
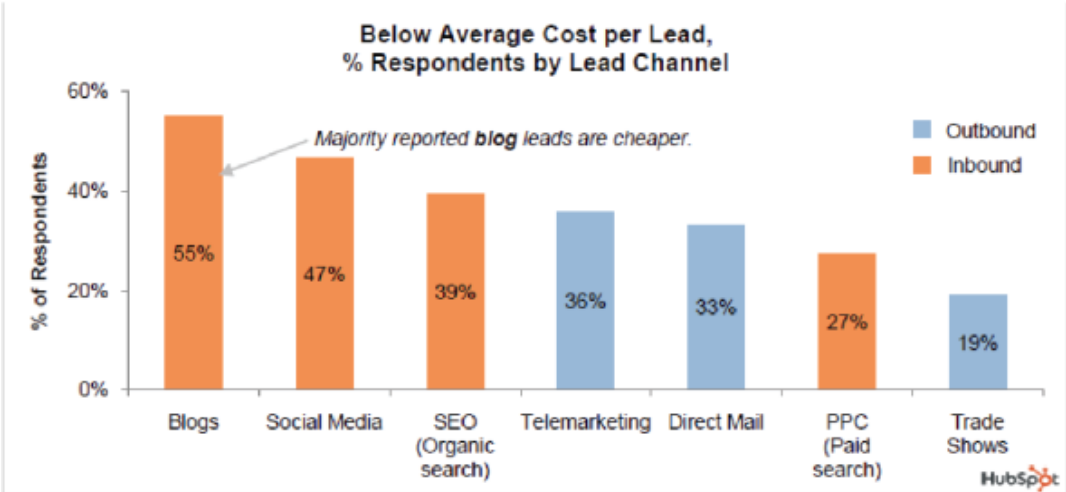
Today, the web is social and interactive. It's not static like most websites tend to be. As such, a website can no longer sustain as its own island. We now need to consider integrating search, social media, content, blogging, and more with our websites. Gone are the days where all it took was a URL, fancy Flash graphics, and an expensive advertising campaign to temporarily boost traffic.

The reason for this shift is largely due to changing buyer behavior. Today's buyer wishes to consume information when they want and how they want and often-times without the involvement of a sales person. And more importantly, they want to be educated and not sold to. As you can see from the following chart, websites and new forms of inbound marketing content (such as podcasts, blogging and social media) have become a considerable factor in the buying cycle.
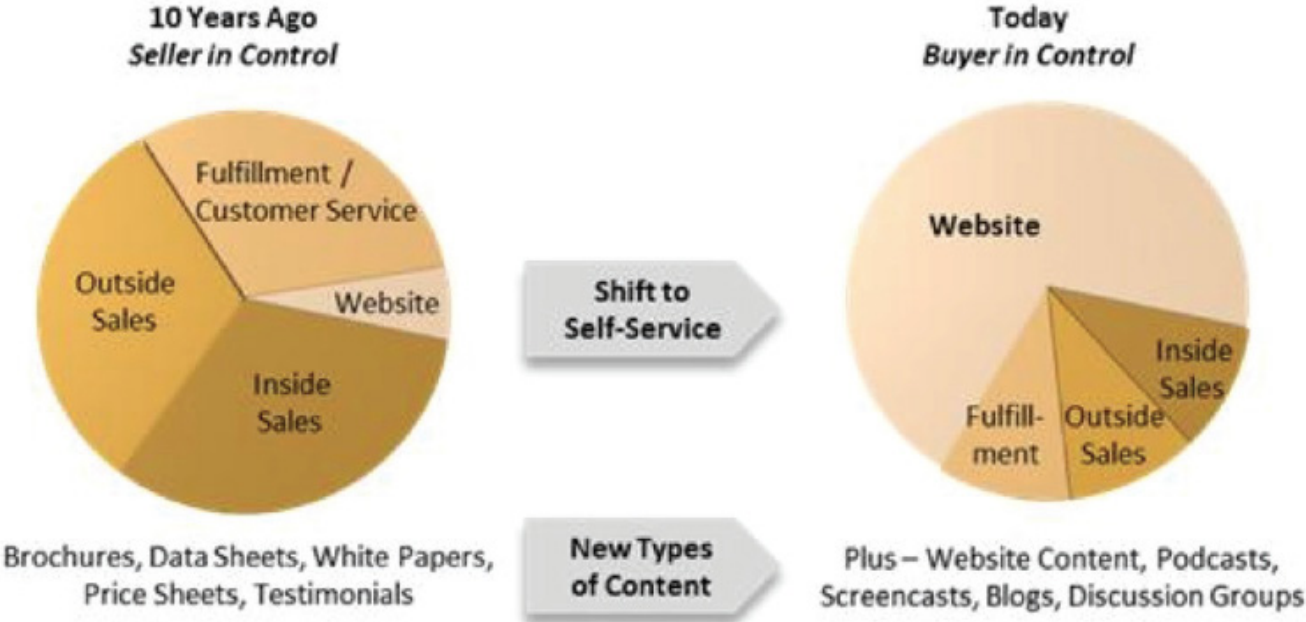
You'll also find in HubSpot's State of Inbound Marketing Report that inbound marketing is more effective in reaching today's buyer. Results show that inbound marketing has a 62% less cost per lead compared to outbound, or traditional, marketing.

What might not be apparently visible here is the role your website plays. It's actually a big one. In most cases, traffic from blogs, social media, organic and paid search end up converting into leads or sales on your main website. Without a website acting as an online basecamp, it would be difficult to attract new business to one source.

Below Average Cost per Lead, % Respondents by Lead Channel

Majority reported blog leads are cheaper.

Blogs 55% · Social Media 47% · SEO (Organic search) 39% · Telemarketing 36% · Direct Mail 33% · PPC (Paid search) 27% · Trade Shows 19%

Outbound / Inbound

HubSpot

This is why having an effective website is so crucial and that it contains key elements to driving more traffic, leads, and sales.

So without further ado, I present to you 13 STRATEGIES FOR CONTENT to build awareness, generate interest, and increase sales opportunities. To learn more about a particular must-have, you'll find additional resources at the bottom of each topic. Definitely take advantage of these if you're looking to become a content authority.

Part 1: Content

Content is one of the most important aspects of any website. With the rise of inbound marketing, content has become front and center in the minds of marketers. It is what search engines and people are looking for. It's what drives visitors to your site and turns prospects into leads. Take a look at these next must-haves for creating killer content.

Audience

Know your audience.

Before you enter into any marketing program, you must understand who you are trying to reach. This is even more important in digital, since different customers are online at different times, in different places, and using different platforms. Some may be only using search (so you need to pay attention to SEO), some may be on social networks (so you need to know which ones and what content they like to share), and some may be limited to mostly email (hello newsletters!).

Similar to when you started your company, or when you do your annual business plan. You probably already ahve the answer. Knowing your audience lays the fountaion for all of your content. Once you are clear on your ideal audience, you'll be able to produce content that truly adds value by providing information, analysis, assistance, or entertainment (or a cobmination of all).

Messaging

Keywords are going to help you get your content to your target audience. Keywords will populate the headlines and content within your website, on your blog, and in your social media posts.

Use free online tools such as [Google Trends](), Google Keyword tool, or just start typing into Google's search bar for their predictive search to find the most searched for terms.

First, you'll develop a list of keywords (short-tail = single word or short phrase) and keyword phrases (long-tail = longer, more complex, and more specific phrase) that you think are relevant to your brand and your service; and that you think your customers are using when they are searching for information related to your service.

Second, use the online tools to analyze the search terms.

Third, use the search terms that work best for your service to reach your target audience. Build in keywords to all online content you create (but be sure to not overload keywords, search engines do not like that!)

*Don't forget, conducting keyword searches to find the most searched for information is also a great way to spark ideas for creating your own content relevant to those phrases!

Messaging

There are four basic questions you need to ask yourself regarding the content of your website.

1. Will people know what I do within seconds?

2. Will they understand what page they're on and what it's about?

3. Will they know what to do next?

4. Why should they subscribe/download/contact you instead of someone else?

Ideally, you want your visitors to know the answers to these questions. It should be readily apparent what your site is about, what they can do there and why they should take action. You likely got your visitors to your site from a link on social media, a guest blog post, or a metion in the media. When they get to your site, you want to keep them interested.

On your homepage and most important pages, consider these helpful tips in delivering the right message:

• Create a few headlines and sub-headline ideas for your most important pages. To combat question #4 (why should I buy from you?) use a powerful value proposition and steer clear from generic cliches, gobbledygook terms and corporate speak.

Who is RMF?

What they want visitors to know

Clear next steps

- Make sure to include clear call-to-actions and next steps. Include links in your body copy, next step links at the end of the copy and calls-to-action wherever appropriate. Most professional services firms have websites that are showcases, not lead-generating so your calls-to-action are not "buy now" or "plans and pricing" but "contact us" or "download our white paper" or "news and updates" - equally effective in the quest to understand who is visiting your site and how you can better serve them. Include a little direction and you'll be glad you did.

- Test your copy. For the most accurate indication of a winning headline, use A/B testing to determine which variation drives the most conversions. You can use tools like HubSpot's A/B Testing Tools, Google's Website Optimizer or services like 5 Second Test. This helps you match your copy with keywords which have greater weight with search engines when in the headline and sub-headlines and body content. You can search Google, Facebook, Twitter and more for keywords based on your company and your audience to see which are most popluar for your industry.

Educate and Offer Value

Even though the purpose of a corporate website is to provide information about your products and services, not everyone is ready to buy when they first hit your site. Second, remember it's not all about you. What's in it for them?

- Offer more than just content about your projects, services, and people. Provide eBooks, whitepapers, videos, and other forms of content that is educational. This will nurture prospects and demonstrate your firm's leadership within your target industry. Your future and current clients and teaming partners will recognize your firm's expetise through the value you offer within your content. Knowing your target audience and offering content that addresses their needs will start the develop the relationship - you might not even realize your future clients are reading your material regularly until they call you!

- In company-specific content - your case studies, news items, and firm information sections - write as if you are speaking directly to your audience. Use words like "you," and "we." Be transparent. Make yourself sound human. Speak their language.

- Let your audience see your culture, your process, your style through your writing - use your brand voice!

- Write your product content as if you are helping them solve their problems. Avoid "we are the best" speak and instead use "this is how we help you…."
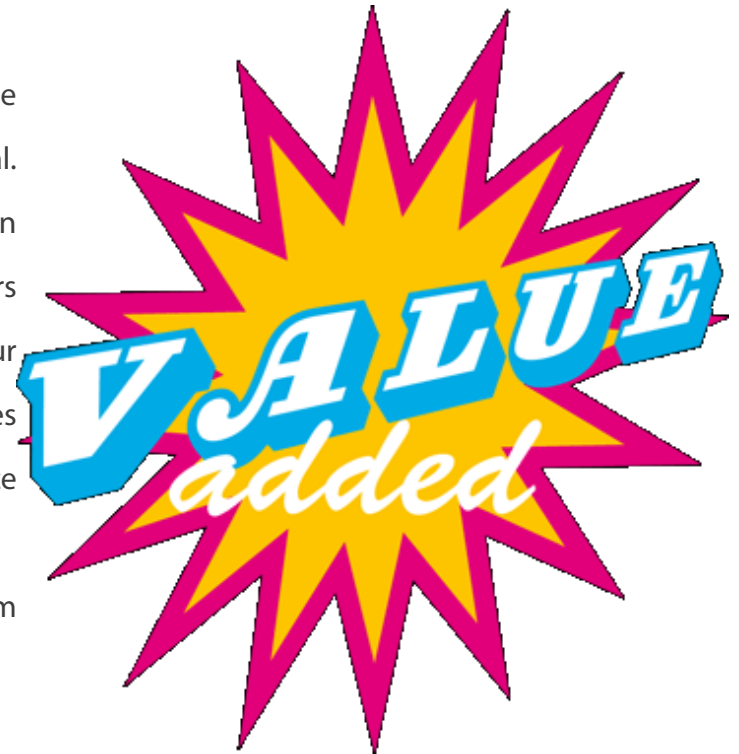
Importance of Quality

Everyone knows having a lot of content is a good thing, but in the days where search engines are getting smarter and buyers are becoming more selective, quality content is truly king.

Quality content is a definite must-have for any website, blog, or social media. This includes:

- Offer unique content. People love this and so do search engines.
- Write for humans, not search engines. People don't read like robots. People are reading your website, blog, and social media accounts to get to know you, build trust, and find answers - write for them.
- Provide value and educational content that helps others.
- Do your research when paying for content that is written by third-party services. Some work well, others do not.
- Keep content fresh. Having news that's two years old still sitting on your homepage will probably give your visitors a bad feeling.

- Know your audience. Providing content that is specific to your buyers makes it more relevant for them, and in turn, higher quality.

- Include evidence when needed. If stating facts, numbers, awards, testimonials and etc., try to back it up with a source and give credit when credit is due.

- Know your subject well. You probably don't want an auto mechanic writing about brain surgery. Accurate content equals quality.

Avoid Gobbledygook

A professional image is necessary but you still want to avoid the dreaded corporate gobbledygook. What is gobbledygook you ask? Great question.

These are jargon terms and phrases that have been over-used and abused rendering them meaningless (you'll find them mostly in the high-tech and B2B industry). These words are meant to add more emphasis of a particular subject but instead they make your eyes roll.

Avoid these words on your website and in other materials whenever possible:

- Next Generation
- Flexible
- Robust
- Scalable
- Easy to use

- Cutting edge
- Ground breaking
- Best of breed
- Mission critical
- And so on… I think I've put you through enough torture

Be Clear and Not Clever

For years, advertising has tricked us into thinking that catchy and creative headlines and phrases work well at capturing our attention. They might have for a while but not so much anymore. As consumers we are tired of advertising trickery, marketing cliques, and surreptitious methods of persuasion. We don't want to be lied to, gimmicked, or fooled. We just want the truth!

Wouldn't it be easier to get the point in our content instead of trying to persuade others?

If you focus your content on being clear, not clever, you will find that more people will place their trust in you. Be careful not to make things more complicated than they need to be. Use simple words that are easy to understand. Your goal is to be understood. Just be clear with what you want people to do on your site. You will gain more fans and followers in the long-run.

Blogging

Blogging is without a doubt one of the most important assets to any inbound marketing strategy and it's a perfect complement to your website.

Here are some reasons why you really need a blog:

- It creates fresh content and more pages of content, which is great for SEO.

- It helps establish you as an industry authority and thought leader.

- It helps drive more traffic and leads back to your website.

- It's a great channel to converse and engage with your audience and customers.

- It's a great way to get valuable inbound links!

Blogging isn't as difficult as you think. There are plenty of blogging tools you can use to get started. If the ability to create content regularly is your main concern, there are inexpensive blog writing services (called Content Marketplaces) like Zerys and WriterAccess that will help you get started. HubSpot has a fun tool that is easy to use- the Blog Topic Generator.

If you still need proof blogging works, HubSpot has lots of research on the subject, specifically:
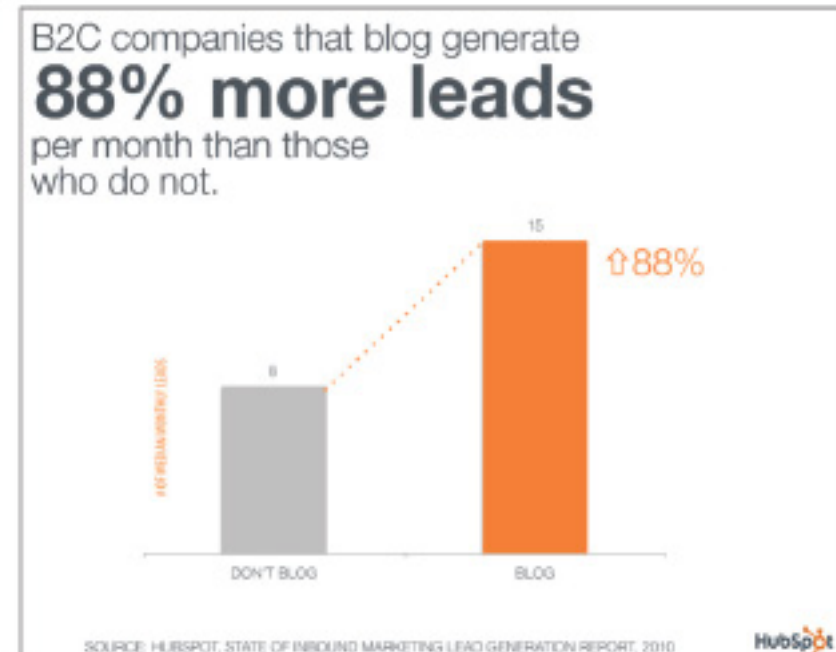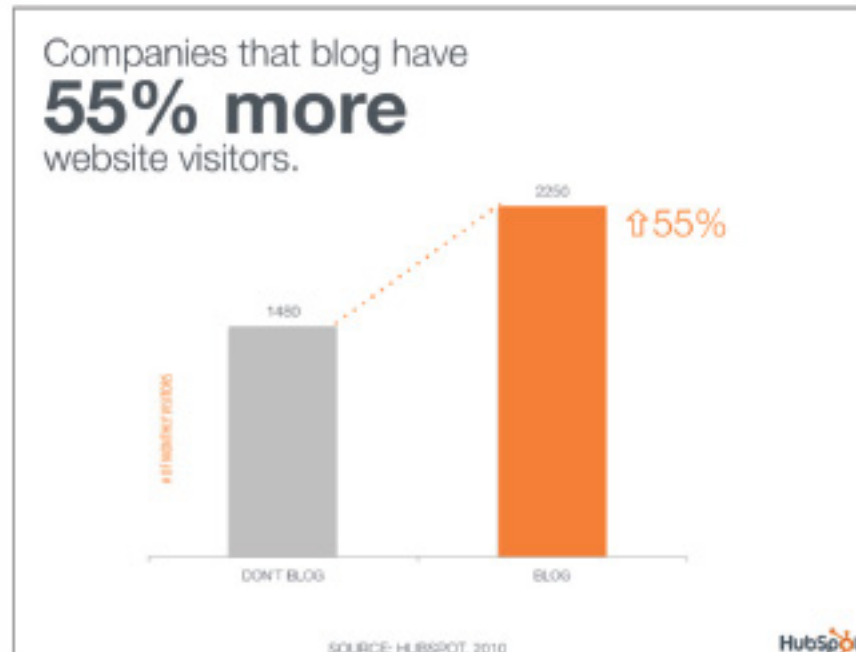
How do you like them apples? Yes, blogging gets results!

I recommend checking out 100 Marketing, Charts and Graphs for more awesome blogging stats.

Make Content Shareable and Social

Social media websites have seen and exponential growth in the past decade and continue to grow larger every day. Oftentimes people will "Like" a post, product, or blog entry, causing all of their friends to see what they like and even provide them with a link to find it themselves.

Consider this type of network effect for your own website. Make it just as easy for people to share and socialize about your content and resources. It's almost blindingly obvious why you should take advantage of this opportunity. Providing people with excellent content that can be shared with their peers will surely increase your flow of traffic.

- Add a sharing widget or plugin to every page on your site. This will enable visitors to share your pages via all the major social networks. Tools like AddThis or ShareThis are easy to install and provide you with analytic tracking as well.

- If you're on a blogging platform like HubSpot or Wordpress, there are plug-ins available that enable people to share your articles plus auto-publish content to your social networks like Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook.

Use Multiple Forms of Content

Content is more than just the written word. Media and utilities are excellent forms of content that can turn a text-heavy site into something that pleases the viewing preferences of multiple audiences.

Content takes place in the form of:

- Imagery (including infographics)
- Video
- Audio
- Online utility tools (e.g. Website Grader)
- Games
- You name it!

Try using many different forms of content. It will help create a content-rich experience.

Customer Proof

No matter what you're selling, potential buyers like to see confirmation that you've made other customers happy. Testimonials, customer reviews and case studies are powerful sources of content for moving prospects even closer to the final buying stages.

- Provide authentic customer stories and don't hide these behind a form!
- Place real, short and powerful testimonials on your site. Tips to maximize testimonials:
  - Try to include real names and titles and use pictures of the person along with their testimonial if possible (if they already have a picture on LinkedIn, ask to use that!). This adds authenticity. Not including a name makes a testimonial seem phony even if it's real.

  - Instead of randomly placing testimonials on any page, consider placing testimonials on certain topics on the pages relevant to them. For example, if you have a quote about your awesome customer service, place that on a service or support page. If you have one for your convenient return policy, place that somewhere in a shopping cart or pricing page.

- The more proof you have the better. Make it part of your strategy to collect case studies and testimonials when possible.

- Leverage other online sites that provide reviews, such as Yelp (for local businesses), or industry specific directories like Capterra (for software providers).

Part 2: Conversion

Now that you know what it takes to drive traffic and engage visitors with great content, the next step is to get your visitors to convert from a prospect into a lead. You don't want them leaving without providing some information or else you will lose the opportunity to nurture them until they are ready to buy. Here are some must-haves for increasing your website conversions.

Effective Calls-to-Action

The effect of a successful Call to Action (CTA) is to drive a visitor to take a desired action. CTAs are typically kept above the fold or in clear sight on a page so visitors know where to take the next step. CTAs are the key to lead generation but they need to be done right to convert traffic into leads.

- Make them bigger and bolder than most other elements on the page, but don't overdo it.
- Consider colors of the CTA, whether it is a link, button or image. Make them look so good people will want to click on them.
- Offer CTAs that provide value, like guides, whitepapers, estimates, etc. "Contact Us" is the worst form of a CTA. Don't rely on that as your only option for conversion.
- Make the CTA look clickable. You can do this by making a button or adding a hover effect to an element.
- Less is more. Keep it simple and clear what is being offered.
- Test when possible. Try testing different colors (e.g. red verses green buttons), language, and placement to see which CTAs get more clicks and drive more leads (refer to the "Messaging" section above for A/B testing tools).

Here are some good examples of calls-to-action:

The other thing about value engineering is that choices are being made. These choices may affect the long term performance and functioning of the project or its durability. This is something that needs to be well documented to be sure that all parties are on the same page as to what is being agreed to.

You might also want to keep track of what assumptions you are making with regard to things like inclement weather. We all expect the weather to be bad. I don't know how you spent your winter, but I was in Philadelphia and it was pretty miserable. There is not much construction going on during miserable days like we've experienced over the last few winters. So, obviously, weather can have an effect on the performance of the work. We definitely want to make sure that our assumptions are clearly identified as it relates to weather.

There may also be a need to keep track of information about decisions that have been made either by estimators, design consultants, or the owner in terms of how to proceed with the work or how to deal with problems that they anticipate encountering. The information that we accumulate during the pre-construction phase ends up being the documentation that supports the basis for our plans and our pricing going forward. Ultimately, that is the most important aspect of the pre-construction documentation.

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Example 1: Trauner Consulting Services

Example 2: Interior Concepts - CTA at the end of a relevant blog post

CTA Positioning

So you have Call-to-Actions, but how will people find them?

You want to think about where you will be placing your CTAs. You don't want to dump CTAs everywhere. That will give people too many options or not the right options at the right time.

Consider this:

- Segment your top-of-the-funnel and middle-of-the-funnel offers. Place top-of-funnel type offers (whitepapers, downloads) on top-level pages. Add middle-of-funnel offers (request a quote, trial, pricing) as the prospect is digging deeper and learning more about your offering.

- Place CTAs both above and below the fold. Placing CTAs above the fold is important because that area of a page gets the most views. However, there are still other areas of a page to promote your CTAs. Add some at the bottom of pages and within body content as well.

- Some studies suggest placing CTAs to the right of the page work better but testing this will ultimately determine what's best for your website.
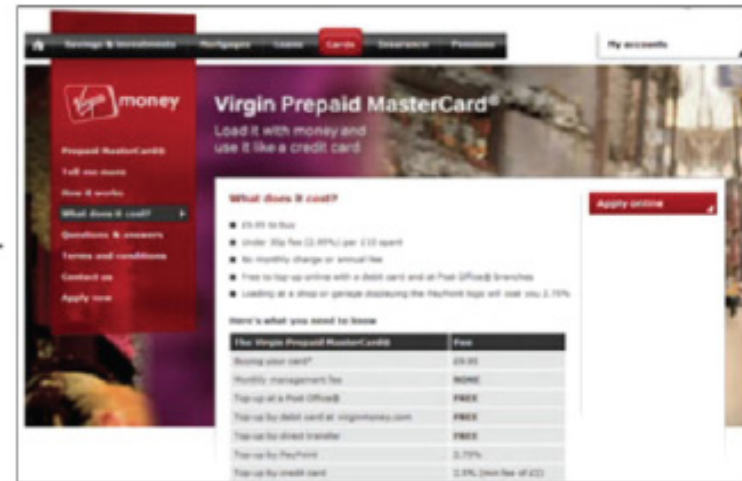
The placement of your CTAs can impact conversion. The only way to know which options work best is to test!

- Use thank-you pages for additional CTAs. A thank-you page or message is what is seen right after someone completes a web form. Many times there is plenty of real estate to offer more downloads and CTAs. Once a prospect completes a form, don't stop there. Offer them additional downloads, however if possible, do so without requiring them to complete another form.

- Test, test, test! As indicated in the example above, it's unclear which version will drive the most conversions. Test different placements to know which one works best for your website.

Landing Pages

Now that you have some awesome CTAs you need to drive those links to landing pages.

Landing pages, sometimes called a "Lead Capture Page," are used to convert visitors into leads by completing a transaction or by collecting contact information from them. Landing pages consist of:

- A headline and (optional) sub-headline
- A brief description of the offer/CTA
- At least one supporting image
- (Optional) supporting elements such as testimonials or security badges
- And most importantly, a form to capture information

Landing pages are necessary to implement. Landing pages direct your visitors to one particular offer without the distractions of everything else on your website. Visitors are on a landing page for one and only purpose: to complete the lead capture form!

What makes an effective landing page?

- Include the elements on the previous page and only what is needed. Keep your pages simple and minimize distractions.

- Never ever use your homepage as a landing page.

- Remove main site navigation from the landing page so visitors can focus on completing the form and not continuing to search your site.

- Make it very clear what the offer is and make it irresistible.

- Absolutely make sure that the content on your landing page matches your call-to-action. If there is a disconnect in your messaging visitors will hit the Back button.

- Reduce friction – don't make visitors think too much or do too much work (i.e. reading).

- Use the right form and only collect the information you absolutely need (see must-have Forms for more details).

Effective landing pages are what will turn your website into a lead generating machine.

Example of a bad landing page:

1. Not sure what this page is offering.

2. Not clear what I'd be signing up for? "Free 2 Week Trial" is hidden.

3. Way too much text. No one will ever read all that!

4. Screen shots of the product are very confusing.

5. No forms directly on this page to capture prospect information.

6. Length of the page might be too long.

7. Selling too much on features and not value.

8. No customer proof: testimonials or case studies.

Example of a good landing page:

1. CCG logo remains in the top left corner.

2. Clear headline describing the offer.

3. Clear image of the offer.

4. Brief description of the offer including bullet points for scanning.

5. Lead form directly on the page with sub-headline re-emphasizing the offer.

6. Content focuses on value.

7. Not too long.

Forms

Forms are the key to a landing page. Without them, there is nothing for the visitor to do on that page. Forms come in handy when it's time for people to sign-up, subscribe to your site or download an offer.

You might be wondering how much or how little information you should require with a form. There is no magic answer when it comes to how many fields your form should contain but the best balance would be to collect only the information you really need.

The fewer fields you have in a form, the more likely you will receive more conversions. This is because with each new field you add to a form, it creates friction (more work for the visitor) and fewer conversions. A longer form looks like more work and sometimes it will be avoided all together. But on the other hand, the more fields you require, the better quality those leads might be. The best way to determine what works best is to test it.
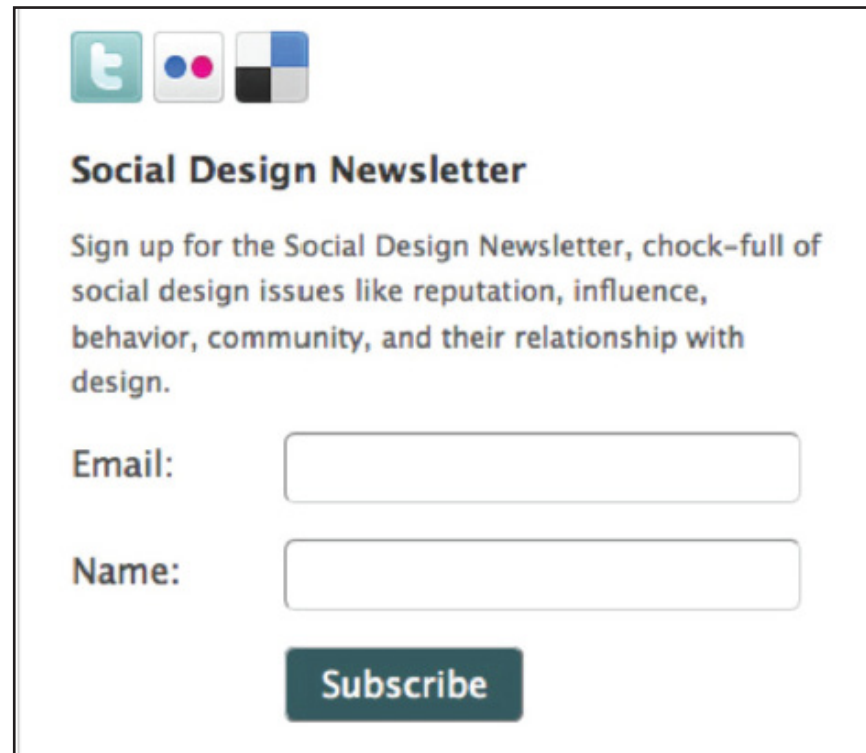
Recommendations for landing page forms:

- Only ask for the information you need for you or your business development team. Also avoid asking for sensitive information that companies or consumers may not want to disclose.

- Consider the value of the offer. The more valuable an offer may be perceived, the more information you may be able to ask for in return. If it's a newsletter subscription, only ask for email address (and maybe first name, at most).

- Reduce anxiety - People are more resistant to give up their information these days, especially because of the increase in spam. Add a privacy message (or link to your privacy policy) that indicates their email will not be shared or sold.

- Don't use the word "SUBMIT" on your form buttons! No one wants to submit anything. Instead, try "download whitepaper," "Get your free eBook," or "Join our newsletter."

- If advertising a downloadable offer as your CTA, fulfill the request instantly. For example, if your form is for a whitepaper download, include a link to download that whitepaper on the very next page (typically called a "thank you" page). Another option is to send an auto-responder email containing a link to the offer. We like to do both - so people can get the content right away, and it is also in their email for future reference.

Newsletters

Speaking of newsletters, you should definitely offer a newsletter subscription on your website. Not all CTAs need to be big offers. Newsletters or mailing lists are the perfect way to collect email addresses so you can nurture prospects over time to become leads. Just make sure it's easy for people to find your subscription form.

Conclusion

The internet has changed everything. Internet usage is growing rapidly and you need to be there when potential buyers come looking. A business website may be the most important factor in your digital marketing strategy, but it's more than just having a website - it's the full picture of content development and amplification through blogs and social media. It's the integration of SEO, social media, blogging, content, CTAs and landing pages that will drive traffic, leads, and sales.

After all, it is these components that generate sales and revenue for your business. Inbound marketing is the key to filling your sales funnel with qualified leads and your website is where education, engagement, and conversion take place.

Follow these guidelines and you will soon have a great website that generates traffic, leads and sales. But don't stop there. A website never truly stops growing. Keep learning and stay tuned for more updates.

Thanks for reading.

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