



PROVIDING INSIGHTS WORLDWIDE

**Showcasing the latest in the marketing ecosystem
from National Positions on Forbes.com**

Everyone (*who's anyone*) has heard of Forbes, right? It's a well-known and respected publication, both online and in print.

Over the last year our own CEO and industry thought leader, Bernard May, has become a member of the Forbes family as a Forbes Agency Council contributor.

"One of our core values at National Positions is innovation. We like to make sure that our clients have the latest tools, technology, and information so they can have the edge over the competition." - Bernard May

Since the beginning of 2018, Bernard has been sharing his marketing insights with the business world through thought-provoking articles and Expert Panel discussions.

What follows are some of the top articles published by National Positions on Forbes.com in 2018. We hope that many of the ideas, tips, tactics, and strategies contained in these articles will help give you the edge you need to stay ahead of your competition.



About Forbes Agency Council

Forbes Agency Council Members are selected based on their depth and diversity of experience, then invited to share their insights via Forbes.com. All articles and insights provided by National Positions are thoroughly vetted by Forbes prior to publication and distribution.

Over this past year alone, Bernard's valuable strategic insights into the marketing world have garnered over 100,000 article views in over 50 Forbes publications.



About the Author — Bernard May

Bernard May is the founder and CEO of National Positions, an internet marketing company established in 2004 and headquartered in Westlake Village, CA.

May is a Forbes Agency Council Member with over 25 years of marketing experience in the areas of entertainment, internet security, and finance.

A Message From Our CEO

"From small brands to enterprise businesses, our goal is to provide innovative information that will help companies grow faster. Our articles on Forbes.com give the entire business community access to our latest insights – anytime, anywhere."

-Bernard May, National Positions CEO

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Hey Google, How Do I Optimize For Voice Search?

The rise of digital assistants provides yet another example of the ways that modern technology increasingly resembles old-school science fiction. There was a time when it was impossible to have a conversation with a computer unless your name was Buck Rogers. Nowadays, you can literally ask a question to an internet-connected device outfitted with voice-recognition technology -- a digital assistant -- and receive a human-like response.

You can ask your digital assistant for directions to the nearest car wash, to wake you up at 8 a.m. or to check on that package you're expecting, and this is just scratching the surface. This is what millions of consumers are doing every day with Amazon Alexa, Apple HomePod, Google Assistant, Microsoft's Cortana and Samsung's Bixby.

It's a safe bet that this type of technology is no passing fad. If current trends continue, then digital assistants will soon come to occupy a central place in our everyday lives, alongside other once-novel tools like GPS and text messaging.

Alexa, What Does The Data Say?

Not convinced this technology is on the rise? Can't get rid of that sneaking suspicion that voice assistants might turn into the next Segway? Here are some key stats that point to the growing popularity of digital assistants and voice-recognition technology:

- By recording one month of sales rates for 2,000 products listed on Amazon, OC&C Strategy Consultants reported that voice-powered commerce accounted for \$1.8 billion in U.S. retail revenues in 2017. This figure is expected to reach \$40 billion by 2022.
- According to the ADI Consumer Electronics Report, more than half of all owners of voice assistants use it at least once per day, and more than 20% rely on it for online shopping.
- By 2020, Gartner predicts that voice-activated searches will account for 30% of web-browsing sessions.

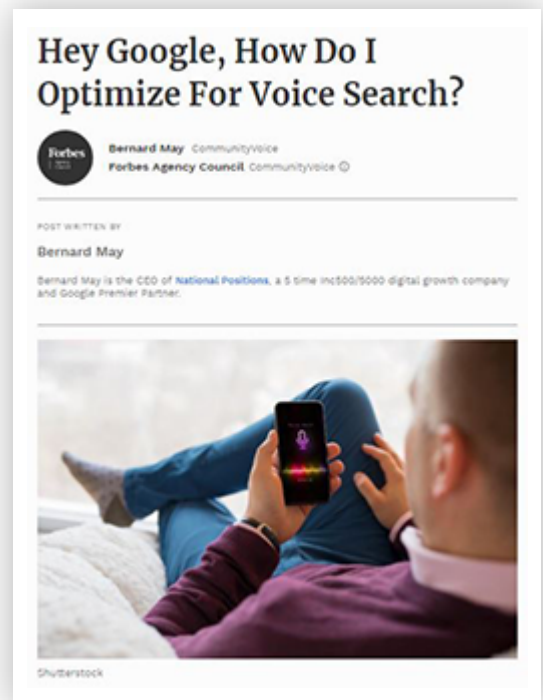
These kinds of numbers are impossible to ignore -- especially for those of us involved in the digital marketing field. It's clear that a fundamental shift in internet search habits is in progress. The public is spending more and more of the typical day talking to digital devices, rather than typing keywords into search engines.

As you might expect, this should have a significant impact on search engine optimization (SEO) and digital marketing strategies, which are based largely on old-fashioned keyboard inputs. Speaking and typing are two very different ways to search for information, and marketers must take this into consideration when figuring out ways to drive traffic to websites.

Hi Cortana, What About Optimization?

What, specifically, can the contemporary marketer do to stay ahead of the curve in the era of Alexa and Siri?

The good news is that we're still in a transitional period, so there's no rush to make everything voice-friendly -- yet. That classic Google Search page isn't going anywhere anytime soon. Having said this, however, it's still best to do what you can to take advantage of the growing popularity of voice search.



Use Natural Speech

Digital assistants are engineered to process normal human conversation, more or less. Want Alexa to find the nearest used bookshop? There's no secret code you have to learn; just say, "Alexa, where is the nearest used bookshop?" We know that most people use their digital assistants in this way.

For example, 2017 Google Data shows that 70% of all searches on the Google Assistant are in natural language. Our SEO strategy must recognize this tendency. Among other things, that means that we need to be getting away from the old-fashioned keyword terms like "used bookshop Manhattan." No one speaks like this in a normal conversation.

Try Long-Tail Keywords

Long-tail keywords generally run from three to five words in length, and they're more specific than standard keywords. They also provide smaller businesses with an excellent opportunity to snag a high Google ranking for certain searches.

For instance, a small mail-order business that sells vintage 50s clothing will probably not rank well on searches for "clothes." The big nationwide retailers have those spots. But a business like this can use more targeted long-tail keywords, like "vintage fifties clothing for women," to attract customers who are searching for specific types of apparel.

How is this relevant to our topic here? Long-tail keywords will likely become more important in the coming years due to digital assistants and their preference for natural language. To put it another way, we tend to use long-tail keywords when we're talking to our voice-recognition devices, whether we realize it or not.

Exploit The Power Of The 'Near Me' Search

If you routinely search with the term "near me," then you're part of a rapidly rising SEO trend. The "near me" search allows the user to leave off their hometown and other location-specific data. This is possible because our internet-connected devices already know where we are. Therefore, it's usually unnecessary to include this information in our searches.

Over the last two years, the "near me" mobile search has seen a **500% increase in volume** when combined with "to buy," "can I buy," or a similar phrase, according to a comparison of Google Data from July-December 2015 and July-December 2017. A related mobile search that has recently surged in frequency is "near me today/tonight." That phrase increased by **900% in the same period**.

Effective voice search optimization is based on conversational speech, not the choppy-sounding keyword searches of years past. Understanding this concept will go a long way toward helping you meet your marketing goals in an environment more and more defined by digital assistants.

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How To Measure Your Facebook ROI

Nothing will move your social media marketing campaign further down the field than a strategy informed by solid numbers, and no single barometer tells you more than ROI. Why? Because you not only want to know whether your Facebook marketing campaign is generating buzz and drawing paying customers -- you want to know whether it's worth the effort you put into it.

But how do you get tangible social media ROI statistics when you're dealing with such fuzzy concepts as brand awareness, reputation and likes? Believe it or not, measuring social media ROI is possible.

Here are three reliable ways to do it:

1. Reach

ROI has two basic components: return and investment. First, you need to define the "return" part. If your objective is to increase brand awareness and expand your reach, then a reasonable goal may be adding 100 new Facebook followers within one month. Or perhaps you're on a quest to improve your reputation. In that case, you may want to generate 10% more likes per post over the course of two months.

Collecting such vanity metrics is easy with Facebook Insights, a free tool that tracks all your basic social media stats, including:

- New followers
- Active followers
- Likes
- Shares
- Comments

Next, you need to measure how the return stacks up against the investment. That means translating soft metrics into dollars. One option is to figure out your cost per like. Let's say you spent \$5 on a Facebook advertising campaign and it generates 150 likes (Facebook Insights tells you how many likes come from paid ads as opposed to organic). This gives you roughly \$.03 "per like" (\$5 divided by 150).

Pretty good. Of course, that figure doesn't include the time spent creating the ad or the resources used to produce it. Factor all of that in and you may be looking at a much lower ROI, particularly if you promoted a video ad.

2. Traffic

You don't want passive followers. You want to turn window shoppers into customers, but first you have to entice them to walk through the front door. In the virtual world, that means getting them to visit your website. If you're not already measuring how much site traffic your Facebook page generates, you should start now.

For that, you'll need Google Analytics, the most powerful tool for tracking and analyzing website traffic. In order to determine whether your social media efforts are paying off, you should delve deep into the "Acquisition" tab within Google Analytics. There you'll find out not only how many visitors come from each type of referral method (e.g., organic versus social versus paid, etc.), but also how many find your site through specific platforms such as Facebook.

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Once you know the number of unique visitors Facebook gives you every month, you can then measure it against the expense it took to generate your social media content for that campaign period.

This includes:

- **Time:** How much do you pay your social media manager, writer, editor, digital marketing company, etc.? If you need to, look on Glassdoor to find baseline pay for a particular area. Establish the cost of labor per hour and then multiply it by the total number of hours it took to create your content.
- **Tools:** Did you make a video? How much does your editing software or subscription cost? How about the physical tools like lighting, cameras, etc.? Whether you use Buffer, Canva or Hootsuite, you'll also need to factor in the cost of your entire social media toolbox.
- **Ads:** How much did you actually invest to promote your ad on Facebook?

You need to go beyond just your Facebook ad spend. Your time investment must also be factored into your cost per visitor total. Now you're close to having a real cost-per-visitor figure that you can use to impress your boss.

Of course, volume alone doesn't necessarily translate into leads, but more views mean more potential buyers, not to mention higher SERP rankings -- and that's essential for success.

3. Conversions

Start by choosing a conversion metric that suits your goals. Do you want people to sign up for an email newsletter, buy a product or download a PDF? Once you have a metric, it's time to measure results. In order to do that, you'll need to add a powerful tool to your arsenal: a conversion tracking code. When installed on a web page, this piece of code lets you track your visitors — how long they stay, what they look at, what they download or whether they buy anything.

You have two options when it comes to trackers. First, there's [Google Analytics URL tracking tool](#), which lets you know whether visitors referred by Facebook sign up for a newsletter or buy a product. Facebook also has its own [conversion tracking tool, or pixel](#), that alerts you when someone completes a certain action on your site. These trackers are the best all-around solutions for measuring conversions from specific channels, which is critical if you want a reliable social media ROI stat.

Making Sense Of Facebook ROI

If calculating ROI seems like an impossible task, don't worry. There are plenty of apps and platforms, such as Social Clout, that can help you collect, organize and analyze the data. The good news is that whatever objective you set, there's usually some way to attach a dollar figure to it and then calculate the actual impact of your investment.

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The Small Business Guide To Digital Marketing On A Shoestring Budget

Brand promotion doesn't come easy, and the odds don't favor small businesses. With neither the time nor the resources to compete with the heavyweights, they have to rely on their wits to get the word out. On the bright side, a number of free (or almost-free) digital marketing tools have made it easier for the underdogs to compete. The following strategies may not level the playing field, but they can definitely help small businesses stay in the game.

List Your Business

List your info (name, description, address, business hours, etc.) on Google My Business to increase your visibility and make life easier for your customers. The details will appear at the top of

Google's search engine results page (SERP) and let people know where to find you, how to get in touch with you and when they can drop by.

The latest version of Google My Business also lets you post business updates, respond to reviews and look at analytics. If you want to increase your odds of success, post on every local business platform, including Bing Places for Business, Yahoo! Small Business and Yelp.

Take Advantage Of Google's Free Tools

Google offers a number of free solutions that can help small businesses market on a shoestring budget. For starters, there's Google Analytics, the most powerful platform around for analyzing web traffic. Then there's Voice, the free phone service that lets you text, call and set up a voicemail inbox without having to pay a monthly fee.

As for cloud services, Google's free suite includes Gmail, Docs, Drive and Calendar. Of course, everything gets better as you rise up the premium scale, but you should try the company's free offerings before handing over any cash. Once you understand the digital marketing landscape, you'll have a better sense of which premium services you need and which ones you can live without.

Create A Killer Website

Every business wants to save money, but the wise ones know you can't skimp on everything. Take your website, for example. It's a billboard, storefront and business card all wrapped into one. It's also the only "store" your online customers will ever see.

In order to attract visitors and retain customers, your site should not only be attractive but friendly – user friendly, mobile friendly and search engine friendly. At the very least, you'll need a clean, secure, responsive and easy-to-navigate design. WordPress, Squarespace and Wix are some quality options that are easy to use. You don't have to go bankrupt trying to create the perfect site, but don't be afraid to invest enough to get the job done right.

Leverage Your Existing Contacts

Starting a business doesn't have to mean starting from scratch, at least when it comes to your contacts. Before branching out and building new lists, tap into your existing resources. Revisit your previous business email lists, and then dig into your personal contact list, your LinkedIn connections and your Facebook friends. Remember, don't be

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afraid to promote your brand content on your personal profile, whether that be Facebook, Google Plus, Twitter or whatever platform you call home.

Reach Out To Influencers

Some small businesses take a “if you build it, they will come” approach to digital marketing. They throw up a website, publish their business info and post on social media as if it were a billboard dotting the highway. While each one of those strategies is necessary, none of them is sufficient.

If you want real results, you’ll need to connect with real people. You can start by analyzing BuzzSumo stats to find micro-influencers who dominate your niche, using HARO to get in touch with journalists who cover topics relevant to your business and spending the time to have conversations with your social media followers.

Master The Basics Of SEO

The world of search engine optimization (SEO) is complex and always evolving. The learning process never ends. Before you dive into the deep end, start with the basics. Use SEMrush or Google’s Keyword Planner to find and then refine your main keywords.

Once you’ve done that, you can install the Yoast SEO plug-in for WordPress. A nifty little plug-in, Yoast analyzes each page for key SEO characteristics. Does your keyword appear in the text? Is your content too thin? Did you include images? Is your site structured properly? The Yoast plug-in will tell you all that and so much more.

Stream Live Video

Once upon a time, a video ad was a luxury, something that could set a business apart from competitors that relied on static images and text. Nowadays, a brand can’t survive without at least one video ad. So what do you do if you want to stand out?

You go live. According to Facebook, live videos garner 10 times more comments than regular videos. Why? Because people want to feel as if they’re part of the action, instead of spectators making observations after the fact. Leverage that desire to find new customers and turn existing ones into loyal, lifelong supporters.

Smart And Frugal Wins The Day

Starting a business isn’t easy. Keeping a small business alive can be just as hard. How do you know what to save on and what to splurge on? How do you craft a strategy that fits your goals? How do you wrap your head around the complex world of digital marketing?

Start by mastering the basics. While you’re at it, grab as many free tools as you can. Learn them. Play with them. See how far they’ll take you. Once you’re on a secure (or more secure) footing, you can dig deeper into advanced SEO tactics and premium apps.

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How To Prepare For The Mobile-First World

The past few years have brought us mobile-friendly marketing, and the next few will herald the age of mobile-first marketing. In order to prepare for the transformation, businesses and their digital marketing gurus need to adopt smart strategies that will meet the needs of customers and search engines alike. The goal is not to cope with the new mobile environment, but to conquer it.

Already, most customer interaction takes place on smartphones and tablets. According to a study conducted by Google and the research firm Purchased, people are **two times more likely** to have a brand experience on a mobile device than they are to interact in person, through the TV or through a computer. As the digital world braces for Google's long-anticipated **mobile-first index**, which seems to be forever on the horizon but never within reach, it's

time to buckle down and craft a mobile-first design strategy before the world shifts beneath your feet. Here are a few tips to help you do just that.

Personalization Shift

Deliver more personalized experiences to gain new customers and hold onto loyal ones.

The days of one-size-fits-all content are over. Now, customers (particularly millennials) expect more personalized service, and mobile devices are the perfect platforms for making it happen.

According to The Boston Consulting Group, companies that have jumped on the personalization bandwagon early have watched their revenues climb **two to three times faster** than those organizations that stuck with a wholesale approach. And the benefits aren't limited to short-term gains.

Brands that nail down personalization now will only increase their market share over the next few years. Those who putter in the slow lane will gradually lose out to their savvier competitors as customers get used to customized mobile experiences and demand more of them.

You don't have to ask how your visitors' children are doing and greet them each by name, but you should know how long they've been customers, what they search for, which products or services they buy and even when they celebrate their birthdays.

Whether you offer special apps for loyal customers or simply track mobile interactions and tailor future offers to past behavior, you can tap into personalization to make the user experience more enjoyable for customers and more profitable for your business.

Focus On Your Local Reach

Use geofencing to target potential customers in a specific location.

Local-based companies stand to profit as mobile takes center stage. In the age of instant gratification, people want what they want when they want it, and they use their phones to find it. To put it another way, foot traffic has become mobile traffic. In this day and age, people may not even look up from their smartphones long enough to

How To Prepare For The Mobile-First World Of 2018



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see the big, expensive sign that graces the front of your restaurant or boutique. If your brick-and-mortar shop doesn't pop up in the local search results, you could miss out on countless impromptu visits.

There are many ways to improve your local search rankings. In addition to fine-tuning your SEO strategy, you can use Google and MapQuest's pinpoint ads, which tie advertisements to specific locations on maps or geofencing technology, which allows business to send app-based ads to people who happen to be nearby at a given time.

The Rise Of Voice

Refine your SEO practices to take advantage of voice search.

When marketers think of optimizing their sites for a mobile-first environment, they usually focus their efforts on a few key mobile-first design principles — load speed (which should be fast), interface (which should be easy to use) and responsive capabilities (which should have been implemented a long time ago) — all of which are essential for survival in the brave new world of mobile devices.

In their rush to stay on top of current trends, however, businesses may be neglecting the future, and that future belongs to voice search. Over **40% of adults and half of teens** use voice search every day, and that number will only grow as AI technology helps tech giants parse people's natural language patterns into searchable keywords and phrases.

While the rise of digital assistants explains much of this trend, mobile devices also play a big role in the voice search revolution. To avoid getting caught by surprise when voice overtakes text as the search method of choice, marketers should start preparing now.

That means focusing more on long-tail keywords, complete phrases and full questions. Instead of choppy terms like "restaurants Denver," people who use voice search tend to ask their phones, "What are the best restaurants in Denver?"

Here's To A Mobile-First 2018

In order to thrive in the mobile-first world, you need to rethink your approach to brand awareness and customer satisfaction. Increasingly, that means integrating your digital marketing strategy into your overall marketing strategy by combining mobile apps with in-store interactions, online ads with interactive maps and voice search with local-based SEO. In addition, it means emphasizing mobile-first design over desktop design.

It's a tall order, but if you take it one step at a time, you'll have a killer mobile presence before you know it.

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Five Ways Voice Technology Is Transforming Our Lives And Businesses

Voice technology is changing how we surf the net, buy products and interact with our devices. Already, we can search for coffee shops while we're driving and order pizza from our home automation devices. In the coming years, we'll be able to talk to our refrigerators, ask our fitness trackers questions, have conversations with our TVs and so much more.

As people ditch their touchpads and keyboards, businesses will have to adapt. Smart leaders and entrepreneurs have already started using voice technology to their advantage. The rest should heed the warning now: Voice is taking over, and it will transform how your customers find and interact with your brand.

With that in mind, here are five ways voice technology will change how we live and do business.

1. Personal Voice Assistants Are Taking Over Homes

The growth in the home device market over the past few years has been nothing short of stunning. According to a [report](#) compiled by Consumer Intelligence Research Partners, there were only 5 million home automation devices on the market in 2016 -- and all of them belonged to Amazon. By the end of 2017, Google and Amazon together had sold 27 million devices.

Now, Apple is getting in the game and Samsung may be next in line. Rumor has it, even Facebook might take a stab at a [smart screen](#) with voice capabilities. Juniper Research [predicts](#) that a majority (55%) of U.S. households will have a device like Amazon Echo or Google Home as soon as 2022. Perhaps home assistants will one day be as ubiquitous as televisions. At the very least, they'll be a central feature in most homes.

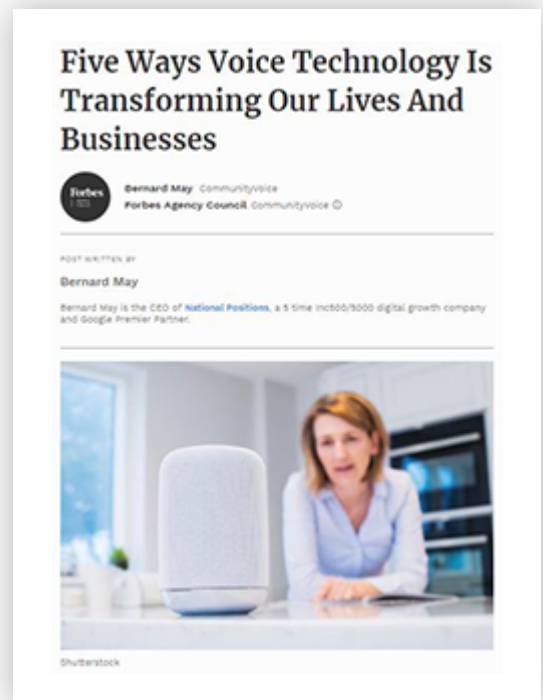
What does it mean? Businesses that want to reach people through their personal assistants will need to learn the basics of voice development. They can start by digging into Amazon [Alexa's Skills Kit](#) (Alexa must have certain "skills" in order to interact with people, and it's the job of developers to teach the personal assistant). Right now, Amazon offers webinars, tutorials, guides, events and more to help businesses master the art of building for voice.

2. Voice Technology Is Changing How We Search

Voice search is gaining momentum. One [2017 survey](#) of online shoppers in the U.S. revealed that 29% use a voice-controlled interface while 41% plan to do so in the future. Meanwhile, 70% of smart home device owners already shop by voice.

As for ads, tech companies have yet to figure out a strategy that works. Still, industry watchers believe that voice assistants will soon collect most of their revenue from advertising. If Juniper's predictions prove correct, voice-based ad revenue could reach \$19 billion by 2022, thanks in large part to the growth of voice search apps on mobile devices.

Indeed, in spite of the growth in the home device market, the majority of voice interactions still occur on smartphones. Two years ago, voice search accounted for [20% of all mobile queries](#), and that figure is rising



rapidly as more people realize how easy it is to ask their phones a question, rather than typing out words on a tiny touchscreen. That's not about to change anytime soon since mobile voice apps allow people to multitask and search on the go -- one of the more convenient features of modern smartphones.

3. Voice Tech Will Combine With AI To Deliver A Better Customer Experience

These days, you can't talk about voice search without discussing artificial intelligence. The two go hand in hand, and the goal is a superior customer experience. While marketers are busy personalizing the customer journey, device manufacturers are refining AI technology in the hopes of developing more predictive search capabilities.

As AI becomes smarter and more capable, voice assistants will offer suggestions based on a customer's purchase history: "Would you like to reorder a bottle of Herbal Essences shampoo?" "Is it time to get new batteries for your flashlight?" By learning how we search, what we buy and where we shop, personal assistants and mobile-based apps will be able to predict our needs and make our lives easier.

4. Every Object Could Soon Have A Voice

The voice revolution is also taking over the internet of things (IoT). Soon, everyday household objects -- from refrigerators to deadbolts, from washers to mirrors -- will feature voice capabilities. If you can see it and touch it, you'll probably be able to speak with it.

But what if you wear it? Don't worry. There's a wearable voice revolution on the horizon as well. Amazon already wants to integrate voice-assistance into smartwatches, fitness trackers, headphones and other gadgets. According to insiders, the devices won't have built-in Alexa features, but will instead pair with Bluetooth, which will then connect to the Alexa app.

5. Businesses Will Have To Rethink Their Marketing Strategy

The rise of voice technology is great for consumers who want more convenient ways to search and shop. But what about businesses? How can brands adapt to the new, voice-dominated world?

Here are a few tips that can help you get ahead of the game:

- **Be more informative than salesy.** When people search on a home device, they're usually looking for how-to advice. Offering life hacks instead of sales pitches is a great way to deliver content that people will actually consume.
- **Focus on long-tail keywords.** People speak in full sentences, even when they're talking to their devices. Use long-tail keywords in the form of phrases or, better yet, questions. You should also try to mimic people's natural speech patterns as much as possible.
- **Know what your customers want.** Use personalized marketing and predictive searches to help people find what they want quicker and more easily.
- **Think local.** Focus on local queries to capture the on-the-go search market.

Prepare now for the coming voice revolution, and you won't get caught off-guard when it replaces text-based search. By using these simple strategies, you'll be able to keep up with the coming changes and influence people's buying decisions long into the future.

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Four Ways To Personalize Your Next Marketing Campaign

Everyone wants to feel special. No one yearns to get lost in the crowd or thrills at the sound of “customer 00014578.” That’s why personalized marketing campaigns have always performed better than their generic counterparts, which smell of mass production, faceless corporations and long lines.

What is personalized marketing? It starts with knowing your customers -- who they are, what they’re interested in, how they shop and what they buy. Over the years, we have seen the benefits firsthand. Personalization increases engagement, drives leads and makes customers happy. Do it right and they’ll reward you with more attention, more trust and more purchases. Now, here are a few ways to align your strategies and market to your customers on a more personal level.

Four Ways To Personalize Your Next Marketing Campaign



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1. Create Customer Personalization With Geofencing

If you believe it’s all about location, location, location, then you’ll love the abilities that geofencing provides. This location-based technology lets you draw a perimeter around a certain area and target customers who wander through it. The best part is that you can get as granular as you want -- down to the city, zip code, street or even block.

Geofencing opens up a world of possibilities. You can send push notifications to lapsed customers who walk by or near your retail location. You can send surveys to those who just left your business after purchasing an item. You can even siphon customers from rivals by reaching out to people who just left your competitor’s nearest location. The opportunities are nearly endless if you’re willing to get creative.

2. Use Snapchat’s Geofilters To Boost Engagement

Snapchat is no longer just for teens and tweens. The app now has plenty of business-friendly features, such as custom geofilters -- a nifty geotargeting tool that’s great for branding. Geofilters consist of texts, graphics and icons that users can overlay photos with when they’re at a certain location. Let’s say you sell skateboards and you know your customers flock to the X Games every year. You can create a skateboard-themed, branded Snapchat filter that pops up when people get near the X Games event locations.

The same thing goes if your audience frequents other events like Comic-Con, Lollapalooza or Shakespeare in the Park. Just beware, the competition is likely to be heavier around the bigger, more popular events and, therefore, prices will be higher. If you want to stand out from the crowd, you’ll need to design an incredible filter and pay a bit more to get it seen.

3. Drive Leads With Email Segmentation

A great email campaign is still one of the most effective tools for driving leads, and personalization is now the only way to succeed at it, in my opinion. Indeed, marketers have understood the power of personalized emails for decades. It started with a simple tweak -- adding someone’s name to the subject line -- and has since blossomed into a full-scale marketing strategy.

According to a [study](#) by MailChimp, segmented email campaigns garner 14% more opens and 100% more clicks

than non-segmented campaigns. These days, businesses can discover nearly anything about their customers, and brands are more willing to ask. That makes all the difference since your segmentation efforts are only as good as the data you collect.

If you want to nail personalized email marketing, you'll need to segment users according to certain characteristics -- demographics, geography, interest, buying and browsing history, engagement level, length of subscription, etc. You can collect that information using Google Analytics, automation platforms like Hootsuite and the ever-valid, ever-handly survey. Armed with that data, you can send your customers emails that have that just-for-you quality.

4. Cross-Promote Your Posts On Social Media

Social media personalization starts with crafting a unique message for each platform, rather than blasting the same updates across all of your channels. It's called cross-promoting rather than cross-posting, and it can pay rich dividends in terms of higher engagement.

It's not just a matter of formatting either. Distinct demographics have grown up around each platform and expectations can change depending on which one they happen to be using at any given moment. As a result, you can be more personal on Facebook, more professional on LinkedIn, punchier on Twitter and more emoticon-friendly on Instagram.

This is where specialization pays off. If you're trying to promote your content on every social media platform ever created, you may be overstretching your efforts. However, if you start with one or two platforms that suit your brand, product and message, you're more likely to see better results.

How do you figure out what shoppers really want from personalized marketing?

The answer may not be easy, but it doesn't need to be rocket science either. In my experience, consumers want personal interaction. They want brands to understand their needs. They don't want flurries of irrelevant emails and unrelated offers. They don't jump up and down when they receive cookie-cutter promotions. Your clients want to know they are valued and respected beyond the transaction.

Adding personalization to your marketing campaign can bring you one step closer to reaching your sales, customer acquisition and customer retention goals.

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How To Use Online Reviews To Drive Business Growth

Positive brand reviews drive growth. Negative ones can destroy reputations. According to recent surveys, 93% of consumers say product reviews influence their purchasing decisions, and 85% trust online reviews of local businesses as much as they trust personal recommendations.

Almost half (49%) need to see four stars before they'll even engage with your business. Fall below a 3.3 rating and they won't bother. Comments may be even more important than star ratings. People read them when they're seriously considering a purchase, and the vast majority (82%) have decided to buy a product or service after reading through the content of a review.

In other words, a satisfied customer is one of the most powerful marketing tools you have, and a dissatisfied one is a nightmare for any growing business. So how do make customer feedback more of an asset than a liability?

How To Get The Most From Reviews

You can't control what people say or even whether they leave a comment, but that doesn't mean you should be passive about customer feedback. Reviews give you an opportunity to showcase your brand's strengths, build lasting relationships with existing customers and show potential customers how much you care.

With that in mind, here are some tips for getting the most from your customer feedback:

Give them a reason to rave.

If you want good reviews, give your customers a good experience. All the advanced marketing tricks in the world will never make up for terrible service or defective products. If you do nothing else, make your customer happy when it matters most -- before they leave your store, close out your website or hang up the phone.

Pay attention to all of your reviews.

That means comments people leave on every channel or platform -- Yelp, YouTube, Facebook, Google My Business, your own website, etc. Even Google doesn't focus exclusively on reviews made on its My Business platform -- its search algorithms also figure in feedback from third-party sites. If you're not responding to comments on every platform, you're missing an opportunity and leaving yourself vulnerable to unchecked criticism.

Ask for feedback.

People are busy. Most won't bother to leave a good review unless you remind them. On the other hand, more than 60% will leave a review if they're encouraged to do so, according to BrightLocal. It could be as straightforward as "Can you leave a review?" or as subtle as "How'd we do?" or "Tell us what you think."

Ask for specifics.

When it comes to search rankings, sentiment is more important than numerical ratings. In fact, Google doesn't give all that much weight to star ratings. It pays far more attention to what people are saying. Its algorithms not only analyze comments for keywords ("bariatric surgeons in Houston") but for value terms ("best," "okay"). The more specific the keywords and the more positive the sentiment, the higher you'll rank in your category. In other words, do what you can to encourage detailed comments rather than simple ratings.

How To Use Online Reviews To Drive Business Growth



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Forbes Agency Council Communityvoice

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Make reviewing easy.

The easier it is to review, the more feedback you'll get. If you don't have a review system on your own website, you should build one now. Focus on making the interface user-friendly and definitely include a star rating. While you're at it, make sure your site and review system is optimized for mobile devices.

Give customers an incentive.

It's bad form to buy reviews or solicit good reviews, but nothing says you can't reward people for taking the time to leave honest feedback. If you're confident about your brand, why not give people an incentive to share their experience publicly? Think coupons, discount codes, drawings and giveaways.

Thank positive reviewers.

If someone took time out of their busy day to leave a review, the least you could do is take time out of yours to respond. Not only does that cement their good feelings, it also lets other customers know how friendly and professional you are.

Respond to negative reviews.

Be polite, professional and specific. Apologize for the bad experience, let them know you're handling the situation, and ask them how you could improve in the future. In the meantime, use direct message to connect with them. Worst-case scenario, they give you another piece of their mind. Best case scenario, you change their mind.

Get your team in on the act.

Everyone in your company (not just your digital marketing team but anyone who has regular interactions with clients or customers) should be focused on reviews. Start an incentive program that gives employees bonuses for good reviews. They'll not only remember to ask for reviews, they'll also work harder to make the customer happy.

Share your reviews.

Highlight quotes and testimonials on your website to bolster your credibility and improve your brand image. Most sites, including Yelp, also let you share your reviews on social media.

Crafting Your Digital Marketing Strategy

Reviews are some of the first things potential customers look at when deciding when to buy a product. One detailed comment written by a satisfied customer is worth a handful of blog posts written by one of your writers, and the most sophisticated digital marketing strategy in the world means little if you consistently get scathing reviews from actual customers. While there are only so many (legitimate) things you can do to encourage reviews, they're worth every ounce of effort you put into them.

[Read Original Forbes Article HERE →](#)

Social Media And E-Commerce Strategies For The Holiday Season

It's the most wonderful time of the year -- for finding the best deals, eating too much food and supercharging your marketing.

The holiday season is generally considered to run from late November through the New Year. Unlike birthdays and anniversaries, this gift-buying frenzy is spread across the whole of society at the same time. That means a lot of consumer spending.

- This year's holiday retail sales are expected to top **\$720 billion**, an increase of about 4% over the 2017 total.
- **Black Friday sales** for e-commerce alone are predicted to hit around \$5.8 billion, approximately a 15% boost over last year. Mobile spending should account for about \$2.4 billion of that.
- U.S. consumer confidence is at its **highest level since 2000**.

As you might expect, all of this Black Friday buzz and holiday cheer requires its own set of strategies when it comes to marketing. It calls for more than just a "Happy Holidays" banner on your website or storefront. In this article, I'll discuss some tips for making the most of this annual e-commerce bonanza.

Get Festive

Many of us like to decorate our home or office to get in the holiday spirit. It's a good idea to give your online presence a similar type of makeover by applying holiday themes to your website and social profiles.

Adding small touches to your website with holiday-themed graphics and colors helps signal to your customers that the season of giving is upon us. Bright, engaging colors and animated GIFs tend to work well.

Don't delay; start spreading those good holiday vibes now. According to a **study by Facebook**, 20% of shoppers begin their annual buying spree in October or even earlier. So, start planning now (if you haven't already) and put your product or service top of mind as soon as possible.

Keep in mind that this season encompasses not just major holidays like Thanksgiving, Hanukkah and Christmas. We also have Black Friday, Small Business Saturday, Cyber Monday and Giving Tuesday, each of which occurs during the post-Thanksgiving rush. These all provide valuable opportunities to market to your customers.

Social Media Advertising

Why is marketing during the holidays different than marketing during other times of the year? It's all about getting people to buy stuff, isn't it? This is a misconception, however. While people spend most of the year buying for themselves, the holiday season is all about giving. It's easy to overlook this simple fact.

And where do gift-givers go for inspiration? Social media, of course.

A recent **Marketing Land survey** found small to midsize business (SMB) owners intend to devote most of their holiday marketing funds to social media, especially Facebook and Instagram. When done strategically, social media advertising can hit the sweet spot between affordability and effectiveness.

When setting up your Facebook ads, be sure to consult the Audience Insights feature to see in-depth targeting data

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Getty Images

drawn from the site's huge storehouse of user-generated information. It's a valuable tool that is specially geared toward marketers and can be your greatest gift during the holidays.

Carousel ads are a great option that we've used for our clients. They let you share multiple images, each with its own message for different products. For example, you could start with a festive image of a hand holding a red sack with a message that reads: "What's in your bag of gifts this year?" Then, each consecutive swipe could reveal a product (e.g., sneakers for your sports star) with a hand removing this item from the gift bag. Creating an ad like this lets you promote your product line for the holidays and keeps in the spirit of the holiday giving season.

Instagram And Social Media Shopping

It's no big secret that mobile shopping is becoming more commonplace, so you need to ensure that your marketing campaigns are mobile-friendly. One way to attract holiday customers through mobile is with Instagram Stories. This feature allows users to post content that disappears after 24 hours. It's intended to capture spontaneous, short-lived moments that can be shared with others, which makes it an ideal fit for the fleeting nature of holiday marketing.

Many marketers are already using Instagram Stories to promote, but what a lot of them don't realize is that Stories allows users (with over 10,000 Instagram followers) to add clickable links. This provides an excellent opportunity to drive additional traffic to your website.

Going Local On Social

Local businesses can compete with industry giants like Amazon by implementing a "buy online, pick up in store" (BOPIS) option. A 2017 survey found that **half of shoppers use BOPIS** to complete transactions. In addition, same-day shipping is another option that local businesses should seriously consider. Amazon Prime has raised the bar regarding consumer expectations for speed of delivery, so you need to be able to get people's holiday gifts to them as soon as possible.

Google's Showcase Shopping Ads

The recently released Showcase Shopping ads feature from Google provides marketers with another opportunity to grab consumers during the holiday season. Rather than highlighting individual products, Google Showcase Shopping ads show multi-image collections of items from a retailer, giving several options to the customer who doesn't know precisely what to buy.

Showcase Shopping ads appear when users search for a general term (e.g., "luxury coats"), and they're based on cost-per-engagement (CPE) bidding. Marketers and holiday shoppers alike can benefit from this.

When it comes to Showcase Shopping, let's talk images and text. Holiday elements such as a red bow on the corner of your product image can help catch the eye of someone searching. Google also allows up to 150 characters for your product description, so adding something like "20% off until Dec. 15" after your main product description can help set your shopping ad apart.

The Countdown Has Begun

The holiday season is hugely important for marketers, and you can't expect to rely on your usual bag of tricks to attract customers. Leveraging the power of social media marketing is vital for increased sales, satisfied customers and a whole lot of holiday joy.

[Read Original Forbes Article HERE →](#)

A Retail Apocalypse 'Near Me': How Local Search Can Revive Your Business

The long-predicted retail apocalypse is here. Almost 80% of American consumers now shop online, and the traditional retail industry has suffered major losses as a result. Over 9,000 stores shut their doors in 2017. Analysts predict this year may bring another 10,000 to 11,000 closures. Malls are getting second lives as office buildings and big-box chains that stock their shelves with generic discount products are disappearing fast, as e-commerce giants like Amazon gobble up their business.

Does that mean brick-and-mortar stores have gone the way of the dinosaurs? Not exactly. Overall, the Department of Commerce reports that retail industry spending has increased over the past year, and many brands have seen their revenues climb. So, what's their secret? Why are some outlets dying while others are thriving?

No doubt there are many reasons, but the resiliency of some businesses might have something to do with their ability to turn the internet from a foe into a friend by harnessing the power of the "near me" search. As a marketing and SEO agency, my team and I examine all areas of search technology and how it affects a business's visibility online (both our clients' and our own). The rise of voice technology and updates to Google's local search algorithm makes the subject of local search one that impacts businesses and their access to their local markets.

The Survival Of The Locally Fittest

E-commerce may be here to stay, but it hasn't yet devoured the traditional retail market. It's true that most of us now buy stuff online, but that doesn't mean we do most of our shopping on the internet. To this day, online purchases account for only 8.3% of all retail sales in the country. The rest is done in person. In other words, there's still plenty of room in the world for physical stores.

The single biggest change may be the way customers find those stores. Increasingly, we're using our mobile devices to hunt for things in the real world. This has blurred the line between our virtual lives and our non-virtual lives. Smart businesses have seen the writing on the wall. Those that want to survive the e-commerce revolution have already taken steps to integrate their physical locations with their online platforms.

Some stores offer discounts for in-store pickups. Others send out promotions that can be redeemed at the nearest location. A few take advantage of geotagging to create real-life experiences that can be shared on social media. One of the simplest strategies, however, is to optimize websites to attract local searchers.

The Power Of The 'Near Me' Search

The phrase "near me" is music to the ears of local businesses. "Near me" searches only drive a small percentage of web traffic but this trend is continuing to grow and could prove to be a lucrative strategy. Think about it: If a woman is looking for a fruit smoothie in East Nashville, then she's probably close to dropping in and grabbing one.

In short, "near me" searches convert. That's always been true for the service industry. Most of us have searched for car repair shops within 10 miles or Thai restaurants within 30 miles, but more and more, we're also searching locally

A Retail Apocalypse 'Near Me': How Local Search Can Revive Your Business



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for tangible items such as clothes and accessories, home goods and electronics. Over the past two years alone, searches for “places to buy X near me” or “where can I buy X near me” have skyrocketed by 500%, signaling a shift in the way we shop.

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In short, “near me” searches convert. That’s always been true for the service industry. Most of us have searched for car repair shops within 10 miles or Thai restaurants within 30 miles, but more and more, we’re also searching locally for tangible items such as clothes and accessories, home goods and electronics. Over the past two years alone, searches for “places to buy X near me” or “where can I buy X near me” have skyrocketed by 500%, signaling a shift in the way we shop.

The Evolution Of Local Search

Not only are “near me” searches becoming more common, they’re also becoming more targeted. The number of people searching specifically for “dresses near me,” for example, rose by more than 600% over the course of two years. Meanwhile, time-sensitive searches, like “R&B concerts near me tonight” or “luxury hotels near me today,” have increased by more than 900% since 2016.

Finally, many people are switching from text-based searches to voice-based searches. In fact, by 2020, it’s predicted that nearly half of all searches will be voice searches. Voice-activated assistants and voice search apps make it easy to find a coffee shop while driving or to search for the nearest Apple store right after a trip to Nordstrom.

All of those changes bode well for consumers who want greater convenience and faster shopping, but what does it mean for local businesses that want to keep their doors open well into the future?

Go Local To Stay Alive

Looking forward, it’s clear that stores will have to master the nuances of local search in order to cater to customers that want a certain something in a certain place at a certain time.

In order to do that, you should:

- Optimize your site with the keyword “near me”
- Display your business name, address and phone number prominently on your homepage
- Create unique pages for each separate location
- Establish a presence on all local search platforms, including Google My Business, Bing Places and Yelp
- Be sure to include location information for better indexing so Google can find you (city, zip code, address, etc.)
- Write blog posts that mention specific events, along with a time and place
- Use natural phrases and questions to capture the voice search audience
- Create blog posts and onsite topic pages that encourage backlinks anchored to location-specific keywords

At the end of the day, the internet probably won’t kill the retail store. It is, however, changing how we shop and where we shop. All businesses with at least one physical location should start thinking now about how they’ll adapt to the changing reality. Fail to do so, and you could risk extinction.

Read Original Forbes Article [HERE](#) →

Are These Three Marketing Strategies Illusions Or Based In Reality?

There are a lot of damaging misconceptions about the world of internet marketing, so let's take this opportunity to separate fact from fiction. There was a time when "going online" seemed like an arcane process that required a Ph.D. to navigate successfully.

Those of us who were around in the early days of cyberspace can remember an era when email was considered a great convenience because messages didn't need to be answered immediately; they could sit there for days -- weeks, even -- until you got around to them. Now, in our modern web-obsessed society, the average person checks their phone nearly **47 times** per day.

The web is no longer the mysterious provenance of tech wizards, and most of us consider ourselves proficient with the internet. These aren't just idle observations. This over familiarity has some annoying consequences for marketing professionals.

When it comes to internet marketing, experts are everywhere. It's all a matter of doing your search engine optimization (SEO), buying Facebook ads and posting a few messages on Twitter. How difficult is that? Unfortunately, that's a line of thinking that routinely spells trouble for do-it-yourself marketing enthusiasts.

1. SEO Perception Vs. Reality

Everyone's heard about those game-changing Google **algorithm updates** that made old-fashioned SEO tactics obsolete, but confusion persists nonetheless. Part of the problem is Google's understandable refusal to reveal precisely how their algorithm works from update to update. That forces the rest of us to draw upon our boots-on-the-ground experience to figure out best practices. Luckily, that experience has given us some key insights into present-day SEO.

Adapting To Change

We all know (I hope) that it's terrible SEO practice to place hidden keywords at the bottom of webpages, the way so many sites did in previous decades. Even so, some old habits continue to flourish.

Too many marketers remain preoccupied with maximizing keyword density, despite algorithm changes that make this approach far less effective than in the past. They cling to the misconception that it's best to insert the same keyword numerous times, so long as it can be done "naturally." Others obsess over exact formulas of keyword density on a page. It's a lot of effort that could be devoted to more productive activities.

You're better off focusing on content relevance, value and context that aligns with the interests of the searcher than about keyword mathematics.

Don't Limit Yourself

"One keyword per page" is a related myth that persists. The idea here is that search engines will get confused about the purpose of a given page if there are too many keywords on it, and your page becomes lost in cyberspace.

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However, we know that pages that rank well for a particular keyword tend to also rank well for other keywords -- sometimes hundreds of them. There's no reason why you need to confine your SEO practices to the old "one keyword per page" rule anymore.

2. Paid Media Vs. Reality

Paid media like Google Ads certainly sounds easy to use. Just choose the keywords you want to rank for, add a headline and make an offer. The reality is that there are so many options and optimizations you need to consider that this set-it-and-forget-it approach is rarely effective.

Know Your Default

Your Google Ads are automatically set to reach people who are in your targeted location and those who show an interest in the area. This poses a problem for brick-and-mortar businesses that depend on local clientele.

Businesses like these could end up paying for irrelevant searches from people who live far away. That's one reason why checking your default settings and making any necessary tweaks should be part of your paid media strategy.

Missing Puzzle Pieces

However, the uncomfortable truth is that even a well-thought-out and carefully managed paid media campaign isn't going to save you if you're lacking in other fundamental areas. Don't put all your resources on Facebook and Google Ads -- if your website is a disaster, you're not likely to get many conversions anyway. Paid media is still a puzzle that requires all the pieces. If a huge one is missing, your payoff is bound to be minimal.

3. Social Media Vs. Reality

Here's another case where people fall victim to a false sense of familiarity. Fairly or not, the assumption is that everyone is on social media these days. This may explain why we tend to think that running a social media campaign would be a simple process. How hard is it to post pictures of cute kittens? Or to acquire 10,000 "friends" who we've never so much as emailed?

Strategic Social Media

In today's day and age, you need a social media marketing strategy. Part of it must include figuring out which platforms are most relevant to your campaign. Not all social media is alike. For instance, LinkedIn doesn't attract the same demographic that Instagram does. To avoid wasting valuable time and energy, try to concentrate 100% on a few platforms, rather than attempting to maintain accounts on every single platform at 50%. It's better to have just a couple accounts that you closely monitor than many accounts you may end up routinely ignoring.

You also need to figure out how to engage with your audience. There are a variety of ways to do this -- videos, online polls, hashtag games, scheduled chats -- but you have to interact with your base, not just increase your follower count.

Real World Focus

You can succeed in internet marketing, but only if you first accept the fact that it isn't as straightforward as it looks. Many marketing misconceptions are based on the eternal appeal of shortcuts. We love to believe in simple SEO tricks that will save us time and energy, but for the most part, these never worked in the first place or have been made ineffective by algorithm updates.

We need to adapt as technology, consumer tastes and algorithms continue to change. Take more time on the front end to strategize and do your research; it's not always glamorous, but it's the only true road to ongoing marketing success.

[Read Original Forbes Article HERE →](#)

Four Places To Share Your Content Online

Going viral is the goal for most content producers these days. Everyone is striving to make it big -- to capture a large audience that extends far outside the content's original reach. One common example is a YouTube video meant to be seen by only a small group of subscribers but ends up attracting millions of viewers across the globe. Its shares, likes and double taps make their way across the social media landscape at full throttle.

However, going viral doesn't always happen by chance. In fact, many content marketers have devoted a considerable amount of time and energy toward figuring out how to generate these happy accidents. There is no perfect formula for social media success, but one thing that has become clear is that too many content creation pros take the concept of "viral" too literally. The term implies a passive approach to content distribution: just put things pretty much anywhere, and with a little luck, it spreads like the common cold in a cramped office.

As a business owner, you can't afford to think like this. "If you build it, they will come" is a nice sentiment but hardly an effective content strategy. And your goal has less to do with overnight fame than the steady expansion of your audience. Let's have a look at some tactics for getting the most mileage out of your online content.

IGTV

It's never been easier to make and distribute high-quality videos. We live in an era where feature-length motion pictures are being created on an iPhone. In fact, most people walk around with a 4K video camera in their pocket. Services like Adobe Creative Cloud will give you all the tools you need to turn smartphone clips into polished video content.

YouTube is no longer the only game in town. Instagram's recently launched IGTV has just opened up the field.

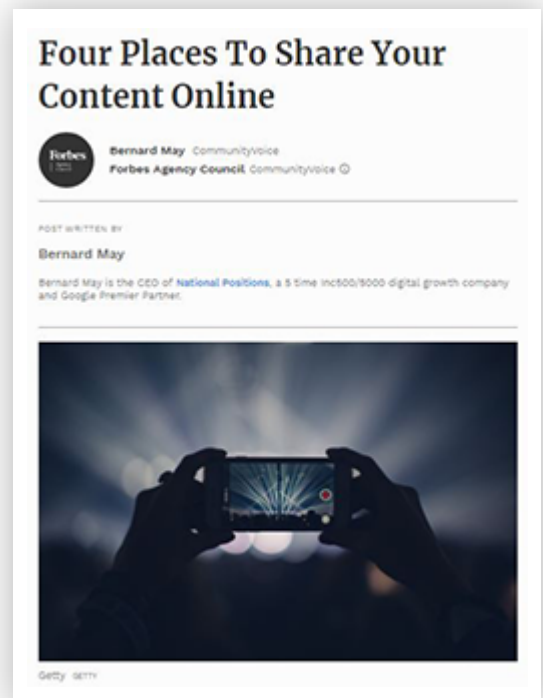
Though it began as a photo-sharing site, Instagram has been introducing video capabilities over the last few years, and the arrival of IGTV is putting YouTube on notice. With this app update, Instagram users can easily upload full-screen vertical MP4 videos, ranging from 15 seconds to 10 minutes in length. For verified users, the limit is 60 minutes. IGTV was launched in June 2018, and it offers plenty of unexplored opportunities for their vertical video format.

Medium

Medium is one of the newer kids on the block (launched in 2012), and that's why it's still an underutilized resource among content creators. Medium is essentially a publishing platform that allows you to post articles outside of your onsite blog. It's a good place for long-form content that you could never cram into those 280-character messages on Twitter.

Medium's [member guidelines](#) forbid the publication of material "with the predominant purpose of driving traffic to an external website, business, or product." You need to have something to say.

One effective approach is to discuss valuable industry topics or business goals that may be of interest to the general



public. Medium goes out of its way to promote compelling, well-written articles, so your efforts here could really pay off.

Medium also has a collection of useful analytics tools for its members, letting you see how many people have viewed your articles, how many read them all the way through, how many liked them, what link they followed and other pertinent information. This enables you to experiment with different types of articles of varying lengths and figure out which approach gets the best response.

Podcasts

The great thing about podcasting is that it can be as low-cost and simple as you like or as elaborate as your budget will allow. You can find multi-guest video podcasts that go for two or three hours as well as no-frills, audio-only podcasts that barely run longer than “Bohemian Rhapsody.” They’re also more popular than you might think: According to [Nielsen](#), about half of all households in the U.S. listen to at least one podcast on a regular basis, and this number continues to rise.

As podcasts adhere to an ongoing schedule -- as opposed to a one-off video -- you will need to do some planning. Fortunately, what you won’t need to do is spend a fortune to get your podcast properly launched. Broadcasting apps like Anchor, Buzzsprout, SoundCloud and iTunes allow users to record and share audio podcasts of any length without any need for advanced “techy” knowledge. Look for an app that hosts your podcasts free of charge and allows you to publish on a variety of other platforms.

The best strategy is to launch your podcast with three to five episodes, rather than rolling out one at a time. That approach maximizes your chances of building up a loyal audience in the early stages and hitting iTunes’ New and Noteworthy list.

Twitter Chats

We’re not talking about just posting messages on Twitter. Twitter chats involve moderated discussions that occur at predetermined times and deal with a specific topic. Each tweet includes an event-specific hashtag (e.g., #OurAwesomeSocialChat) to keep the discussion organized. The most popular chats happen every week at a dedicated time and generally take about an hour. It’s a simple, low-pressure way to network with those who have an interest in your industry.

Beyond the goal of simply spreading your content, Twitter chats give you the opportunity to grow your audience and connect with others in your industry on a deeper, more meaningful level. When it comes to engaging with your audience in real time, it is hard to beat the flexibility that Twitter chats afford.

The world of content creation will continue to evolve, and you need to evolve with it. The good news is that you don’t have to do it alone. You have ready access to many tools and platforms designed to make your job easier and your content more dynamic.

And who knows? With the right content, strategy and, yes, a little bit of luck, your brand could be the next viral sensation.

[Read Original Forbes Article HERE →](#)

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Stuck In The Old Ways Of Advertising? Here Are 10 Tips To Help You Embrace The Future



Forbes Agency Council CommunityVoice

Avoid Google's Wrath

You need to be strategic and realistic. The continued use of annoying ad practices that interrupt user experience is what helped fuel this ad blocker movement. Keep placement strategic, minimal and to the point. Make opt-outs clear and simple. Don't use auto play video, audio or opt-out timers. Making these small fixes is also likely to improve effectiveness while avoiding Google's wrath.

- Bernard May, National Positions

13 Effective Methods To Help You Keep Customer Loyalty While Rebranding



Forbes Agency Council CommunityVoice

Prepare Your Audience For The Change

Most people don't like change. Period. Brands need to keep in mind who they are trying to attract and whether or not a rebrand is worth losing a percentage of their existing customers in order to gain a new client base. Brands should also launch "something new is coming" campaigns to prepare the public, priming them for the upcoming rebrand. Launch the campaign and start listening!

- Bernard May, National Positions

Finding Your Muse: 12 Ways To Inspire Creativity For Marketing Professionals



Forbes Agency Council CommunityVoice

Turn On Your Tunes

Besides the plethora of mentors and past experiences, there is one constant that I can always depend on for inspiration: music. Different types of music trigger different parts of the brain, activating various emotional states. So, depending on the inspiration needed, different genres such as classical, lo-fi and alternative can help uncover creative ideas.

- Bernard May, National Positions

Sell It Without Sound: Nine Ways To Capture Attention With A Muted Video



Forbes Agency Council CommunityVoice

Treat The Video Like A 10-Second Pitch

This is the ultimate 10-second pitch. How does your product impact, simplify and add value to the customers' day-to-day life? How is it different? How is better? Answer these questions in a visually stunning way while highlighting the best aspects of your product. Remember, if a prospect is on Amazon, they're already in "buying mode." You just need to give them a reason to buy yours.

- Bernard May, National Positions

10 Ways To Differentiate Your Inbound Marketing Content Strategy



Forbes Agency Council CommunityVoice

Tell The Story Only You Can Tell

Use the one thing other companies don't have: your brand, perspective and experiences. Create content that's specific to your brand. The world doesn't need another "seven ways honey is good for your health" blog post, but we do need to know how Sally created Voney, the first vegan honey brand, and why it matters to her and the vegan community. Nobody but Sally can make this content.

- Bernard May, National Positions

Agency Pros Weigh In On Nike's Controversial Kaepernick Campaign



Forbes Agency Council CommunityVoice

More Than Sports

Nike has taken a risk with this campaign and a calculated one at that. Nike knows that as much as the youth recognizes sports figures, the youth also values the current social commentary. So, Nike has taken a step beyond just the sports arena and applied its "Just Do It" slogan to ideals and perspectives, as well as athletics. I believe that, for its audience, it is a very smart move.

- Bernard May, National Positions

13 Scalable Ways To Reach Your Audience In A More Personal Way



Forbes Agency Council CommunityVoice

Work Backward And Target One Person First

We build a persona as if targeting a single individual first. What do they look like? Where do they shop? What do they eat? What music do they love? From here, we work backward and start scaling and testing. It's easier to find an audience in this manner than to start too broad and spend months scaling down.

- Bernard May, National Positions

11 Predictions For The Future Of AR And VR In Marketing And Advertising



Forbes Agency Council CommunityVoice

Customize Everything

With AR technology, advertising will no doubt become more integrated into our daily lives. Advertising and marketing will utilize more real-time data based on user preference to dynamically affect messaging, colors, avatars, timing and placement. A more fluid human experience is the ultimate goal.

- Bernard May, National Positions

Vetting An Influencer? 10 Steps To Determine If They're Worth The Investment



Forbes Agency Council CommunityVoice

The Validity Of Their 'Influence'

Verify the validity, engagement and reach of the influencer you are considering hiring. The number of followers means nothing if 53% of them are fake and another 30% are not active. Beyond the monetary investment, make sure the data provided by your influencer about their own "influence" is real.

- Bernard May, National Positions

Thinking Bigger With Forbes

Bernard May's contributions are inspired by the marketing challenges he's faced as well as those of National Positions clients. He makes sure to constantly keep a finger on the pulse of digital marketing by staying up to date on the latest trends and putting his own spin on these advancements.

"If our clients have a question or need a solution, this means that there are hundreds of other businesses that need the same question answered," says Bernard. "Working with Forbes allows us to not only help our clients, but we get to think bigger and help thousands of readers as well. It's a great feeling."

If you have any suggested topics or trends that you'd like to see Bernard discuss on Forbes.com or on the National Positions blog, please feel free to email: bmay@nationalpositions.com.



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