

Ultimate Guide to Growth



Table of Contents

01	How to Find Your Audience	04
02	Competitor Research & Analysis	08
03	Finding Your Key Differentiators	12
04	How to Create a Marketing Strategy	14
05	Identifying Your Marketing Tactics	21
06	Creating Content Assets	25
07	Implementation and Testing	34
08	Measurement	37
09	Conclusion	43

AdRoll brings together everything ambitious brands need to grow: the insight to find the right audience, the reach to deliver the right message through more than 500 network partners, and the analytical tools to guide key marketing decisions. All of this adds up to more quality traffic, more sales, and more meaningful connections with customers. To get started on your own path to growth, sign up today.

Foreword

In a crowded marketplace, ambitious businesses find a way to push through the weeds and tower above their competition.

They flourish despite the odds, whether it's becoming the most popular provider of [personalized treats](#) or the most widely-recognized [outdoor apparel designer](#), and their success often stems from the same root: a marketing strategy that fuels growth

For small to mid-size businesses, solopreneurs, and entrepreneurs, this can be a daunting task. Going up against brands with big digital marketing budgets is difficult enough. Finding your ideal customer, researching competitors, identifying key differentiators – all this can seem even more confusing. Where do you start to get the most bang for your digital marketing buck?

In our Ultimate Guide to Growth, we'll provide you with a step-by-step plan to turbo-charge your growth. You'll learn how to identify your audience, create a digital marketing strategy, pinpoint specific marketing tactics, and produce marketing content. We'll also discuss testing and measuring your tactics so you can determine the impact of your efforts



01

How to Find Your Audience

The easiest way to find your ideal audience is to determine who your ideal customer is: the busy parents planning the ultimate birthday parties, or the first-time homebuyer looking for the best mortgage rate. Most companies have more than one ideal customer profile (ICP), although many of their characteristics and demographics may overlap. Here are a few critical items these profiles will need.

Customer Demographics

[Customer demographics](#) span a wide range: age, education, gender, income, location, marital status, occupation, and hobbies. For the purposes of your customer profiles, determine what's relevant for your business. More companies are using demographic data to customize marketing; according to Econsultancy, 45% used demographics in 2017, up from 38% 2015. Knowing characteristics like marital status, income, and hobbies will help guide you in developing the ideal messaging, offers, and imagery to use when marketing to your customers. A millennial software developer may respond better to an irreverent tone, but a Gen X physician may appreciate straightforward language.

If you've been in business for a while, you can poll your existing customers to see what works, or test different messaging to see what drives conversions. You can also look at who your competitors are targeting via their messaging (look for clues in their language like, "We save busy parents time..." to spot which demographic they're targeting). This can identify new audiences that you've previously overlooked.

Niche Surprises

BURROW

Originally targeting urbanites renting walk-up apartments with sofas that could be assembled without tools, sofa-in-a-box company Burrow quickly realized its target market was broader than they originally estimated. Given millennials increasingly rent rather than own (even outside of metropolitan areas), Burrow expanded its marketing efforts and surpassed \$500,000 in sales per month.

Target Customer Geographics

When we talked about customer demographics, we mentioned location as an important point to think about, and other companies agree. Econsultancy found that, in 2017, 44% of companies were looking at geographics, up from 38% in 2015. This isn't just useful for local businesses (like your corner pizzeria). Online retailers and service businesses can use [geographics](#) domestically and internationally to see where their customers are located. Finding existing geographics can be as easy as looking at your web analytics and drilling down into where your visitors come from and what they did on your website.

Geographics can also help tailor messaging to particular markets. For example, if you sell home furnishings and goods, your campaigns for customers in large cities could focus on maximizing small spaces, while marketing to suburban customers could more generally discuss home décor.

Where Your Customer Is Online

Now that you understand who your customer is and where they live, it's time to figure out where your customer spends time online. Knowing web behavior helps you place content and ads in the right places on the right platforms at the right time. For example, your ideal customer may spend a lot of time on Facebook yet not use Pinterest.

If you've been in business for a while, you can create an online survey for your existing customers and ask what sites they spend the most time on: Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, local news sites, or national business news sites, to name a few. If you're a relatively new business, the [Pew Research Center](#) tends to have good general information about where your ideal customer may be browsing.

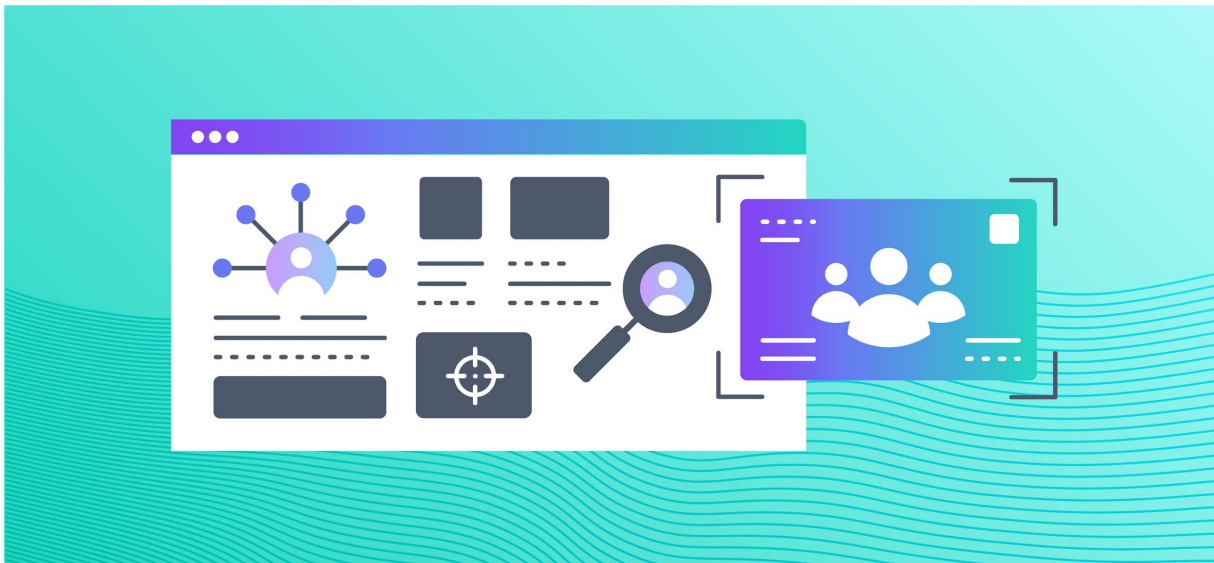
Empathizing with Your Customer

What keeps your ideal customer up at night? Once you've identified demographics, geographics, and where your customer spends time online, it's important to put yourself in their shoes. To grow as a business, you'll need to empathize with your customers and speak to their needs.

An online clothing retailer targeting a single, 20-something professional in a big city may share tips on building a polished office wardrobe on a budget.

A pet supply company targeting a busy 30-something professional in suburbia may share tips on keeping a cat's litter box from stinking up the house.

Figure out what your customer needs and capitalize on how your business fills the gap.



How to Identify Your Existing Online Audience

Whether you've been in business for a while or are just starting out, it's crucial to have some sort of analytics software installed on your website (like Google Analytics) to learn more about your existing customers.

Depending on what platform you use, you can view demographic information like age and gender, where your visitors came from (did they type in your website address and come straight to you? Google you? Click on an ad you have running on Facebook?), and where they're located, down to the city. You can also see what devices they use (iPhones, Android devices, or Windows computers, to name a few) and what pages they visit on your site.

Tracking website visitors can help you understand on what product or service pages customers are spending the most time and how they find and interact with your website.

Now that you know how to find your audience, let's take a look at what your competitors are doing with theirs. We'll start by diving deeper into competitor research and analysis and provide a step-by-step process for how you can get inspiration from your competitors and find a sweet spot for growth.

AdRoll 101: IntentMap

In working with over 37,000 ambitious brands around the world and having run over 450,000 campaigns, we've built out digital profiles for over 1.2 billion online users: where they like to shop, how they like to shop, and what they shop. We call this the AdRoll IntentMap, and it allows you to find audiences (and customers) similar to yours.

The Roll-Up:

- 1 | The easiest way to find your ideal audience and customer is to create a persona of who they are.
- 2 | Knowing your customers' demographics can help you develop the right messaging that speaks to their needs.
- 3 | Customer geographics can assist with knowing where your customers come from, locally and globally.
- 4 | Poll your customers to find out where they spend time online, so you can spend your time and effort on ads and content where you'll reach customers like them.
- 5 | Put yourself in your customer's shoes to create empathetic messaging.
- 6 | Use website analytics to find demographic and geographic information, learn how customers are finding you, and understand what your customers are viewing on your website.



02

Competitor Research & Analysis

Now that you know more about your ideal customer, it's time to take a closer look at how your competition is going after them. This means having a deep understanding of how your competition markets itself. Conducting this research will help you figure out what they're doing well, pinpoint gaps in their strategies, and determine how you can take advantage of these with future marketing initiatives.

Why Competitor Research and Analysis Is Crucial for Improving Your Marketing

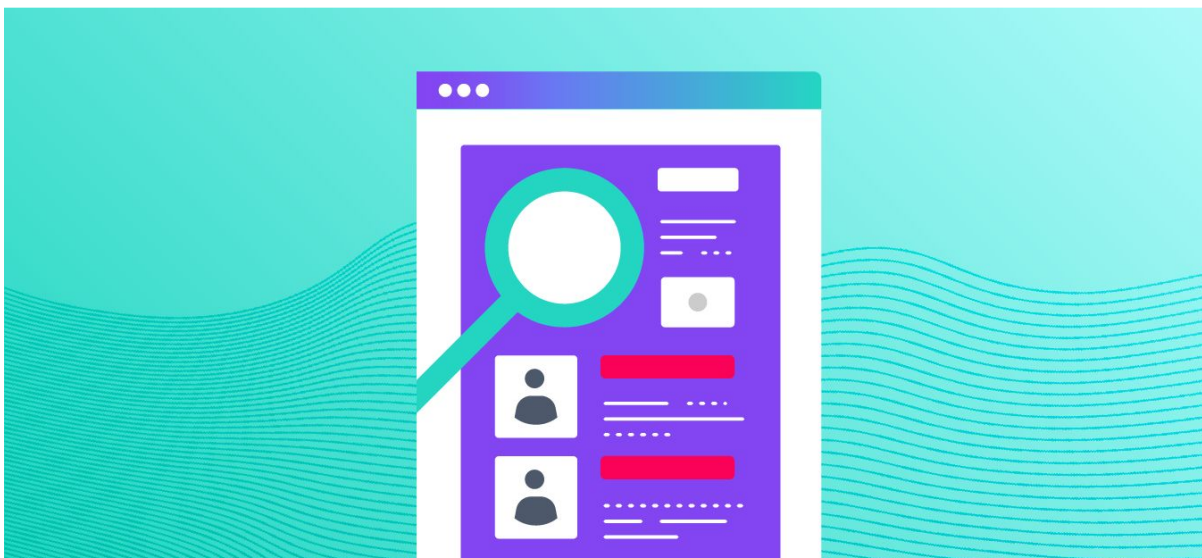
What your competitors are great – or weak – at can help you with your own marketing. Their successes and challenges give you ways to find potential opportunities and untapped niches. You might even uncover possible threats to your own business.

For instance, sustainable sunglass company [Sunki](#), learned that another competitor was successfully advertising on social media. To counter, Sunki used segmentation (which involves dividing audiences into different groups based on demographics, buying habits, or other parameters) to help personalize ads that were more relevant to each of their audiences. By better matching

content to specific target audiences, they created better engagement and achieved a 2.4X return on investment on their campaign.

You'll also need to pull back and hunt for more than just your direct competitors. Often, you'll have indirect competitors who don't do exactly what you do, yet fill the same need for your audiences.

For example, if you're a business offering accommodation like [Student.com](#) who targets college and graduate students, consider the marketing tactics of related competitors like short-term rental brokers and regularly apartment hunting websites.



How to Approach Basic Competitor Research

A step-by-step approach makes it easier to navigate the choppy waters of competitor research.

You don't need anything fancy to start – a simple spreadsheet for tracking your findings and your web browser are enough.

- 1 | Start with the basic messaging on your competitors' websites. How do they structure their information? Explain their products and services? If it's not clear what they do, their audience likely doesn't either.
- 2 | Check past website messaging with sites like archive.org. How has your competition's message changed over time? This can tell you what customers are interested in.
- 3 | Slip into your web browser's Incognito or Private mode. This lets you search anonymously without all your past cookies and location data. In other words, you'll put yourself in your customer's shoes and see what they see when searching for companies like yours – without tailored search results from your past Google sessions. A clean slate will give you a clear view of your competitor's content. Use keywords related to your company and your competitors. You'll discover where your competitors are appearing in search results and what keywords they're using to get there. You can also see how they're describing themselves in their meta description, which is the paragraph that appears below the title of their site in results.

- 4 Create a not-so-secret dossier on your competitors: how long they've been in business, where they're located, how many locations they have, number of employees, and even funding, if you can find that out online. A competitor may be small, revenue- or employee-wise, but may have just gotten a big round of funding - providing them with plenty of cash to beef up their marketing. You'll know if your competition is more of a threat than you thought.
- 5 Take a look at any news coverage your competition gets, note the promotions they offer, and poke around on social media. Posts on their page or other pages can be a gold mine of information. You can find out common complaints or issues their customers have through social reviews and publicly posted customer comments they're trying to bury, like products that break after one use.
- 6 Sign up for your competition's newsletter with a free email account and check out their content. This will help you track what they're doing and how good they are at following up. It may also provide inspiration for your own newsletters.
- 7 Keep tracking your competition over time. You don't have to update your research every week, but try to go back every month or every quarter. See how they're changing up their messaging, the images they use, and how they differentiate themselves (see the next section for uncovering your own unique differentiators!). You can even look for clues that they're trying out new messaging, or pricing structures. If you have the budget, enlisting the help of a PR firm can also go a long way. Sometimes you need an outfit operating on the outside to zero in on your key strengths and weaknesses.

Everything you learn with competitor research can be used for your own marketing. You'll find inspiration for your own messaging and new customers to target. Competitor research also lets you see what isn't working, in the way something is phrased or images used. It also sheds light on any weaknesses you can exploit, like your own stellar customer service compared to theirs.

SWOT Analysis

Once you've researched your competition, take the information you've learned and use it to create a SWOT analysis. A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis can serve as your strategic road map. While you're completing this worksheet, keep both your ideal audience and your competitors in mind. You may find a lot of opportunities and threats. For these purposes, you can simplify by focusing on the ones you can change with marketing. For example, a competitor's weakness could be customer service that doesn't respond quickly. While you can't impact delivery with marketing, you can set better expectations.

	Helpful	Harmful
Internal	Strengths	Weaknesses
External	Opportunities	Threats

The Roll-Up:

- 1 | Competitor research and analysis is the process of taking a look at how your competition is positioning themselves in the marketplace, identifying their strengths and weaknesses.
- 2 | Conducting competitor research and analysis can help you identify opportunities and threats in the marketplace, and refine your own messaging.
- 3 | Include both direct and indirect competitors in your research.
- 4 | Take a step-by-step approach to competitor research, and keep tracking your competitors' messaging over time.
- 5 | Do a SWOT analysis to create a strategic framework for your marketing.



03

Finding Your Key Differentiators

Your key differentiators are what make your company unique. Unlike your strengths and weaknesses, key differentiators clearly separate you from the competition. They can be an advantage for you and should also be something that your team can rally around, like your startup story or your core values as a company, and can't be duplicated by competitors.

How to Identify Key Differentiators for Your Brand

When you start looking for key differentiators, start from the inside. Understand why your company exists and why it started. Who are you, and what do you offer that the competition doesn't? What is completely unique about your company and can't be copied?

For example, [Claudio Lugli Shirts](#) goes beyond being an apparel retailer. The company believes that the clothes you wear should be as individual as you. All their shirts include rich details that celebrate individuality, and they limit the numbers they sell so that you don't show up at work wearing the same shirt as your coworker. That's what sets them apart. What's different and authentic about your company will help you unlock your key differentiators.

AdRoll's Story

In the early aughts, you needed a large budget and a truckload of resources to get your message across effectively. Recognizing that, AdRoll was formed to give growing brands the chance they deserve to shine.

That's why we brought together everything ambitious brands need to grow, including the insight to find the right audience, the reach to deliver the right message through more than 500 network partners, and the analytical tools to guide key marketing decisions.



Authentically Artistic

TeePublic is not your average custom t-shirt retailer – it’s a marketplace that supports independent designers. The company provides a platform for them to grow their business. In doing so, it sets itself apart from the herd of custom product marketplaces. Fostering independent artists gives TeePublic a unique spin.

Even your founding story can be a differentiator. If your success story is similar to your ideal audience, you can use it to create something your potential customers want for themselves. If the story aligns with your ideal customer profiles, leverage it and tell the story from your own perspective – something another company can’t replicate.

Your other key differentiators may not be as exciting as a tech company started out of a garage. But they’re still important. Your competition can easily catch up to price and technology. Instead, focus on the small things that set you apart from the herd. If it’s something meaningful, like a

commitment to the environment, a focus on philanthropy, or a community of happy and engaged employees, it’s an important distinction. It aligns with someone’s core beliefs.

Ultimately, you’ll want to map your key differentiators to your ideal customer profiles, which you learned about in the last section. Think about what matters to them, whether that’s supporting independent artists, saving the environment, or just wanting to feel beautiful. Then, use those differentiators to craft an authentic story for your brand.

The Roll-Up:

- 1 | Your key differentiators are what set you apart from the competition and are unique to your company.
- 2 | Look at what is authentic about your company to find your key differentiators.
- 3 | Small details, like ways you’re making someone’s life easier, also matter when setting yourself apart from the competition.
- 4 | Don’t try to differentiate based on technology and price; these are easy for competitors to replicate.
- 5 | Map your key differentiators to your ideal customer profiles when telling your story.

04

How to Create a Marketing Strategy

Once you're done with your research, what do you do with it? First, you're going to take what you've learned about your brand, your customers, and your competitors, and pull it all together to create a marketing strategy.

A marketing strategy is your overall game plan for reaching your audience and turning them into your customers. It's important for a few reasons:

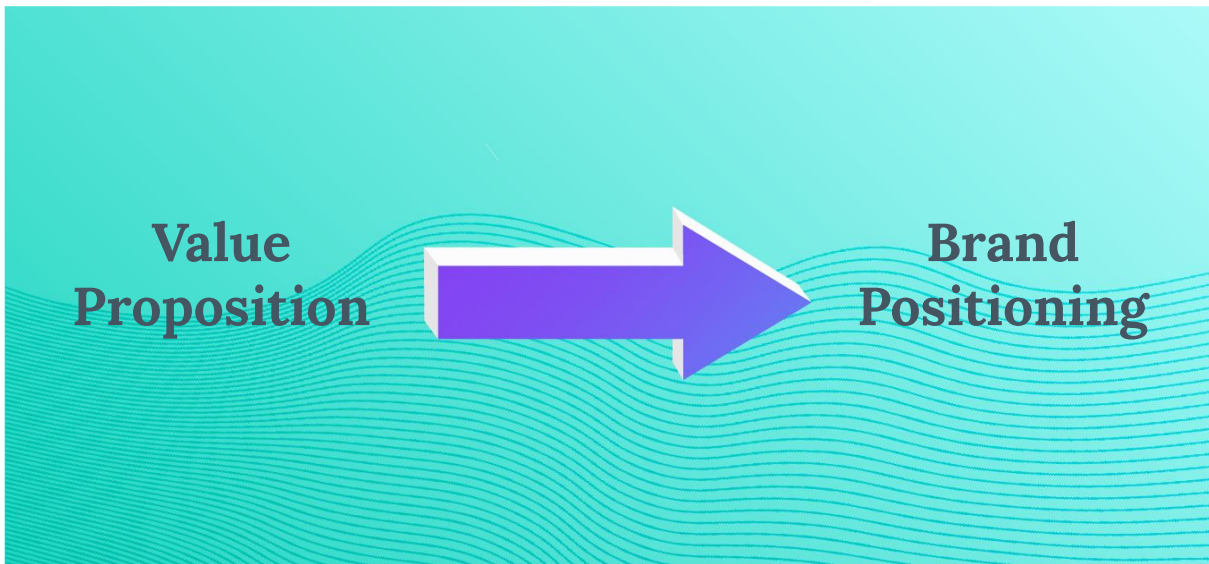
- 1 | It lets you focus your resources—time, money, and people—on what will help you reach your business goals.
- 2 | You can better plan for growth.
- 3 | It helps you understand what's leading to success - or not.

As with any game plan, you'll need to know the players, what your strengths are, how to “score,” and how much it will cost. Your marketing strategy needs to include who your audience is, who your competitors are, and what your differentiators and value proposition are, which you learned about in previous sections.

Your marketing strategy should include:

- 1 | Overview of your audience
- 2 | Overview of your competitors (adding in your SWOT analysis here can be very helpful)
- 3 | Your positioning based on your differentiators and value proposition
- 4 | How you'll communicate that to your audience (your messaging)
- 5 | Goals and objectives for your marketing
- 6 | Metrics that you will use to measure your success
- 7 | Tactics (specific actions to take) to reach potential customers
- 8 | Your budget for tactics

Once you've sketched this out, let's grab the key differentiators to craft your value proposition and messaging.



Developing Your Value Proposition

Marketing guru Neil Patel says that a value proposition is a “unique, measurable, specific promise” that solves your customers’ problems, alleviates any fears they have about your company, and gives them a reason to act. All the research you’ve done on your ideal customers and brand differentiators gets put to use here. Your value proposition needs to clearly express what your brand stands for, what makes it different from your competitors, and act as an internal reference point for everything you do.

From your value proposition, you can create your brand positioning, which will bring your value proposition to life. It’s the message you put out to your audience that balances the logical and emotional elements of your brand. It needs to be straightforward, relatable - and above all else, authentic.

Take your ideal customer profile (ICP) and make a list of their pain points - the challenges they face that your product or service solves. Then, write out what it is about your products or services that meet those needs. Finally, use that information to create a positioning statement.

For example, the positioning of apparel company UNTUCKit, which creates men’s casual shirts that are designed to be worn untucked, is very clear and to the point: its target market is men who want to be comfortable while still looking sharp. It represents this throughout its advertising and messaging: Find your fit.

[Cornell University](#) Associate Professor, Doug Stayman, provides a great template for a positioning statement: "For [insert Target Market], the [insert Brand] is the [insert Point of Differentiation] among all [insert Frame of Reference] because [insert Reason to Believe]."

Every marketing decision you make should support your brand's positioning statement.

Crafting Your Messaging

Now that you've identified your ICP and brand positioning, it's time to begin crafting your messaging. Solidifying your brand's messaging will ensure that all your various marketing tactics are not only consistent but truly connect with your customers.

Here's how to craft your message using everything you've learned so far:

- 1 | Understand your customer (Ideal Customer Profile, Section 1)
- 2 | Determine your features, benefits, unique selling points, and differentiators to use in your messaging (Finding Your Key Differentiators, Section 3)
- 3 | Define your voice and tone. Will you be known as the confident and upbeat brand that inspires its customers to take action? The lighthearted, whimsical brand?
- 4 | Decide the things you want to talk about in your messaging, like your quality, style, design, value, etc.
- 5 | Figure out where you'll communicate that message (Channels, detailed in Section 5).



Outdoor apparel company [Topo Designs](#) targets weekend warrior office workers by offering stylish and sporty-but-affordable apparel, backpacks, hiking gear, and accessories that transition easily from the boardroom to the hiking trail. Its positioning is simple: to produce well-designed apparel and gear that can be worn anywhere. And it reaches its audience with easy-to-understand, plain language that communicates product features, accompanied by colorful photography that highlights quality and style.



Setting Your Business Goals & Objectives

What is the ultimate goal of your marketing strategy? Is it to make your audience more aware of your company? To get as many new customers as possible? To grow the lifetime value of your existing customers?

For example, an online retail brand may want to make a certain amount of sales in Q4, but an app developer might want to increase the amount of time its customers use the app. Deciding on one specific overarching goal - like hitting a revenue target by a certain time - makes it easier to measure the progress of your plan, and easier to communicate your strategy with your team.

Once you know what you want to do, you can focus on how to get there. That's when you'll decide how you'll measure success via metrics - and monitor those metrics regularly. This will help you determine the overall health of your marketing strategy.

Here are some sample metrics to look at based on the tactics you use:

Tactic:
Weekly blogging

Metric:
Organic traffic growth
month-over-month,
time on page, bounce
rate, new subscribers,
social shares

Tactic:
Email marketing

Metric:
Open rate,
click-through
rate (CTR),
unsubscribes,
conversion rate

Tactic:
Display advertising

Metric:
New site visitors,
conversions, Ad views,
cost per acquisition
(CPA), return on
investment (ROI)



Creating Your Tactical Marketing Plan

Once you've finalized your positioning, messaging and business goals, you've laid the foundation for your tactical marketing plan. Every business should create one because it acts as a roadmap for bringing your future marketing campaigns to life.

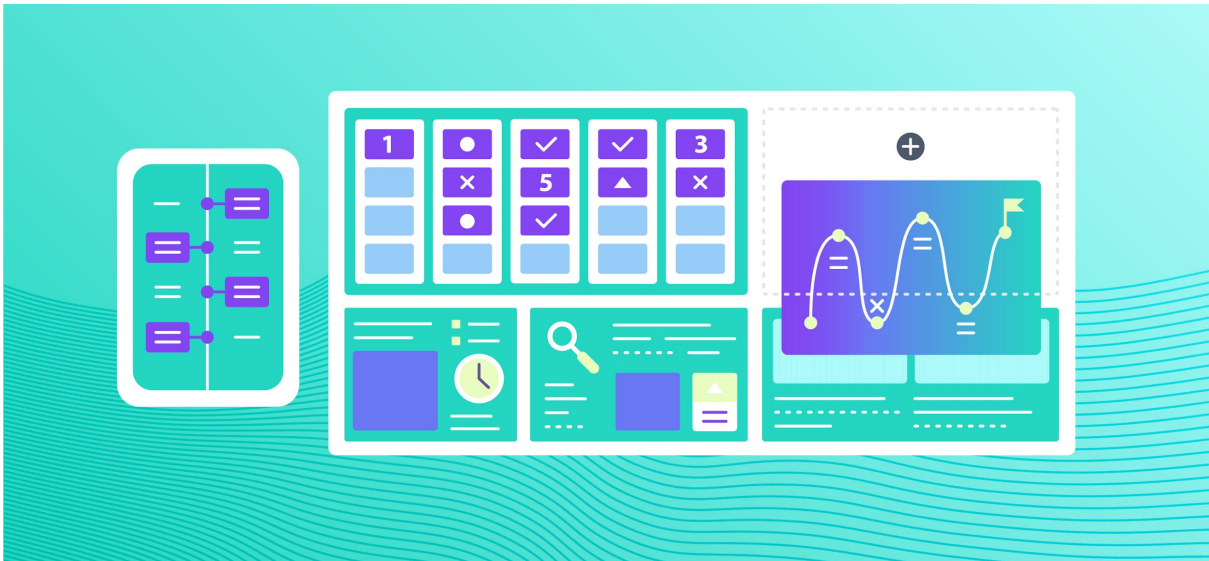
A tactical marketing plan outlines how you'll meet your goals. This is where you put your marketing strategy to work to set your priorities and establish concrete tasks and timelines. You've already set business goals, identified your ideal customers, and completed a SWOT analysis in the previous section. **Now, write out:**

- 1 | Marketing tactics you've used in the past, like social media ads or emails. What worked best? What didn't? Figuring this out will help determine where your budget should go.
- 2 | How do your customers usually find you: through online searches? Word of mouth? Social media? Knowing this will help you decide which channels to use to find more customers.
- 3 | Where do you tend to lose customers? Are they typically one-time sales? This will help you find ways to optimize your sales process and increase customer lifetime value (how much a customer spends over time with your company).

Next, take your business goals and come up with a marketing objective, or a goal or group of goals that your business sets out to achieve within a certain time period.

For example, let's say your annual revenue is \$1 million, and your goal is to increase that by 10% (with half of that revenue coming from new customers). If each customer spends \$500, you'd need to bring in 100 new customers to make that happen.

All of this will help you identify your marketing tactics, which you'll learn more about in the next section.



Creating a Marketing Budget

One of the most difficult things for businesses to do - especially smaller ones - is to create a marketing budget. Setting your marketing budget ahead of time helps you determine how much you should be spending to find new customers and where you need to allocate your marketing dollars. How much you spend depends on your overall goals, how much money you're bringing in (revenue and/or from investors), and your short-term goals.

The good news is, digital marketing lets you be fluid - you can change what you spend as you go. If you look at key performance indicators (KPIs) like cost per acquisition (CPA), how much it costs to get a new customer, you can see where you're spending too much per user or tactic.

Start with a modest budget. The [U.S. Small Business Administration](#) recommends that companies with under \$5 million in revenue spend 7-8% of their revenue on marketing.

Next, figure out your objective. Perhaps you need to promote an upcoming event, like a product

launch for example. To raise awareness you'll want to determine where your ideal customers hang out online. They could be on Facebook, Twitter, or other platforms. This will require a little bit of research, but once you have an idea where they are, you can begin to figure out what marketing channels you need to set aside budget for.

For ongoing tactics, revisit what you're spending every month or quarter. Some channels, like email or Facebook ads, may work better than others: driving more customers to your site, for instance. You'll see pretty quickly where to focus if more customers are clicking through the Facebook ad and spending time on your site. Give yourself enough time to see what impact the tactic or message has on your business. For example, if your sales cycle is 7 days, don't expect a two-day ad to make a big impact.

Don't be afraid to try new things. Experiment with different tactics and channels, and then measure the results to see if it generates new business.



The Roll-Up:

- 1 | A marketing strategy is your roadmap for reaching new customers, connecting with existing customers, and growing your business.
- 2 | To develop your positioning, identify your customer's pain points, pinpoint the specific value of your services, and determine what makes your business unique. This will become your value proposition.
- 3 | Write a positioning statement based on your value proposition. This will be the foundation for all your messaging and advertising to your audience..
- 4 | Develop messaging that includes your positioning statement and the voice and tone you've chosen for your brand.
- 5 | Set an overarching goal for your marketing strategy, like generating \$50,000 in revenue from new customers.
- 6 | Decide on the tactics you'll use to reach business goals with your marketing.
- 7 | Create a marketing budget that fits with long-term and short-term goals and your revenue stream.



05

Identifying Your Marketing Tactics

In the last section we spoke about the different tactics you can use to successfully reach your target market. Now let's get a little more specific about some of them. Blog content, digital advertising, social media, and other tactics and channels can all be leveraged to deliver your message to the appropriate audience.

But how do you decide which tactic to choose? That depends on your specific marketing goal.

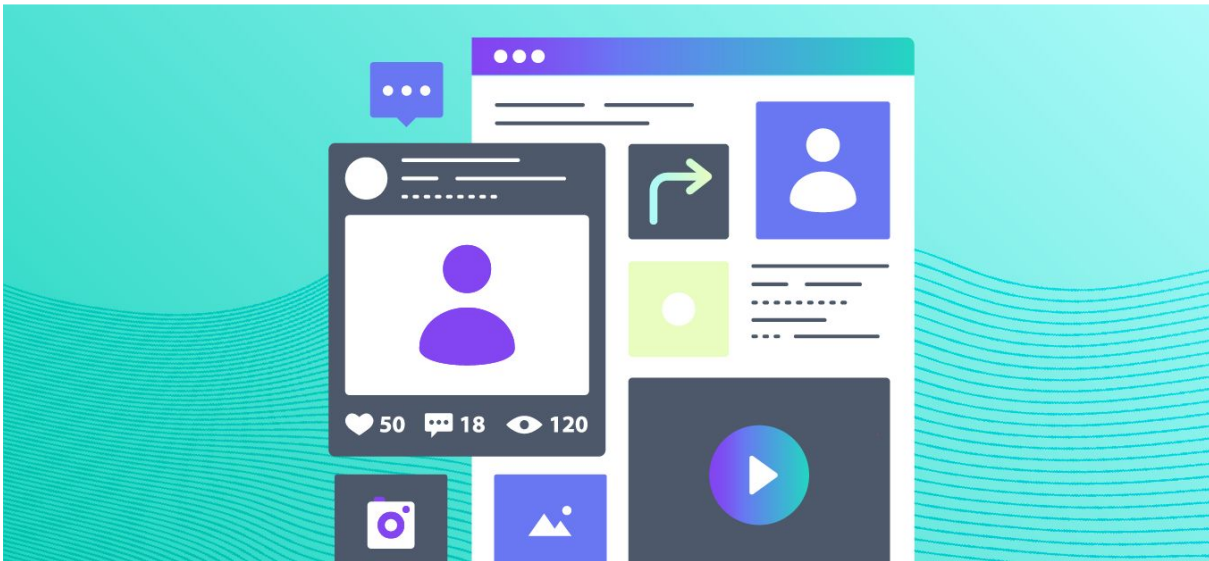
Each channel we just mentioned lines up with a specific objective you set for your business. That could involve increasing brand awareness, attracting new buyers, or engaging existing customers. In other words, choose a goal to focus on, then choose a tactic that will help you accomplish that goal.

Remember the business goals you set in Section 4? Keep those in mind when you're thinking about which tactics will work best for attracting your target customers.

As an example, say your goal is to increase revenue by \$50,000. Tactics that could help you achieve this would be activities like digital advertising, retargeting (using previous visitor behavior to serve up a new ad that is relevant to them, for example, for a product they had viewed previously), and email marketing.

Ultimately, what it will come down to is your budget and your goals. Don't be afraid to take a risk or test a new channel or tactic. You may be surprised at the results you get. Continue to monitor the results of your chosen tactics, and don't be afraid to make small changes to your approach over time. Always review the results from your marketing tactics, and then adjust them accordingly.

Now let's unroll some of the more common marketing tactics:



Social Media

The social media platforms most people use are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Pinterest. [Several billion](#) people post, tweet, and 'gram every day, so it's a great way to get your message out. Social media marketing is divided into two tactics: Paid social media (such as social ads and promoted posts) and organic social (like community building and engaging with fans and customers through shared social content). A business page is a great place to build a community and engage current customers. Meanwhile, sponsored posts can be better for attracting new customers.

Blog Content

Blog content lives on your website and is a great way to increase search visibility, engage with new potential customers, and share your expertise. Use the right keywords (based on SEO research), and the blog posts you write can show up in search results, helping attract new customers and increase sales. You can also create a space for existing customers to go to get answers to their frequently asked questions. You can even promote these posts on social media, in email marketing campaigns, or through digital advertising.

AdRoll 101: Look-Alike Technology

Finding new customers is easier with AdRoll. After you create engaging display, social media, video, and other ads, our Look-Alike Technology finds additional audiences that are similar to your existing customers and shows your ads to those new shoppers. If you want to get your message out to more potential customers, [try it out.](#)

Email Marketing

More than a newsletter, email marketing means sending emails to prospects and customers who have given you permission to contact them. If you do it well, you can turn their interest into sales with a series of tips and offers. But to build this email list, you'll need to capture email contact info, and that's where social media, your blog content, or digital advertising will be helpful. For example, you can direct social media visitors to a form on your website to get them to sign up for your newsletter - maybe in exchange for a piece of free information, like a "What to Look for When Buying" checklist.

PR & Media Outreach

In Section 2, we briefly mentioned working with a PR firm. If you have the budget, a PR firm can be a huge advantage. If you have more time than you do budget, then you can get a fair amount of media coverage by acting as your own hype-person. Research online journalists using resources like [Muck Rack](#) and try pitching stories about your company, products, or brand story to relevant writers. Or email them a press release announcing a new product line, notable company hires, or a new round of funding. That could be all you need to do to get a quote in an online publication, which can then raise awareness of your company and establish trust with potential customers or even potential new employees.

Digital Advertising

Digital advertising covers a lot: social media ads, banner ads on websites, video ads, and more. These are paid ads that you run across different channels and devices to attract new users to your website, convert them into customers, and engage them to increase how often and how much they spend. There are various ad sizes, types (video vs. static), and positions you can run here, and there are multiple ways to measure the success of your activity. Video ads can be displayed in several places, including websites, at the beginning of other videos, and other spots.

Pay-per-click (PPC) ads are another type of advertising. With PPC ads, you pay when someone clicks on your ad.

Then there's retargeting, which works well for engaging visitors who aren't quite ready to take an action, like set up an appointment or make a purchase. The process of retargeting uses previous visitor behavior (like viewing a certain product) to then show someone an ad for that same product, as they continue to surf the web. The ads are then personalized based on how that person has reacted in the past, whether that was clicking on a new ad or ignoring it. Since they're repeatedly viewing personalized ads, undecided customers are more likely to get off the fence and make a purchase. In fact, [78%](#) of customers prefer personalized ads.

AdRoll 101: Retargeting

We can show you retargeting in action. Our platform shows relevant, personalized ads to your visitors based on what they've already viewed. Then those ads are placed on their social media feeds, website margins, or in their email inbox. It's a convenient way for you to convert visitors into customers and customers into repeat customers.

The Roll-Up:

- 1 | There are a lot of different types of marketing channels and tactics that you can choose to use for your marketing: social media, blog content, email marketing, PR and media outreach, and digital advertising to name a few.
- 2 | Use your business goals and budget to prioritize what channels and tactics you'll use.
- 3 | When looking at your digital advertising tactics, try AdRoll's look-alike or retargeting— which pushes relevant ads to visitors who have already viewed something on your site who you want to take action—capabilities, depending on your goals.
- 4 | To create ads featuring previously viewed products, recommendations, or products abandoned in carts, connect your e-commerce platform with us.



06

Creating Content Assets

After you've created your positioning statement and chosen your marketing tactics, it's time to create content assets – ads, blog posts, videos, and other visual or written pieces that will engage your target audience and convert them into customers. Keep in mind that every piece of content needs a goal: to highlight new products, create some buzz, or simply encourage visitors to buy from you.

You can create a lot of different types of content assets. How do you choose which content formats are best for your brand? Once you've identified your goals, ask yourself a few questions:

- 1 What types of content do your visitors engage with? Are there particular pieces that drive likes or shares on social media, or posts that spark comments and conversations? Are there ads that get a lot of clicks or images and video that get a lot of engagement? Do your competitors use copy or creative that's particularly resonated with you or told a story well? Don't be afraid to use those for inspiration!
- 2 What are the common themes and subjects that you can use to create more than one content asset? For example, if you're a custom apparel shop, a common theme for content pieces could be how to create a design that looks best on shirts and other items. You could then create a blog post on using color in designs and an ad showing how easy it is to create a design. While each piece will be different, it's easier (and more effective) to create assets that have similar messages.
- 3 What action do you want people to take after seeing this content? Every piece of content should have a clear call-to-action that encourage people to engage further with your brand or take the next step.

Once you've answered these questions, decide on the type of content you'll create (visual, written, and/or ad) and the channels you might use to promote the content.

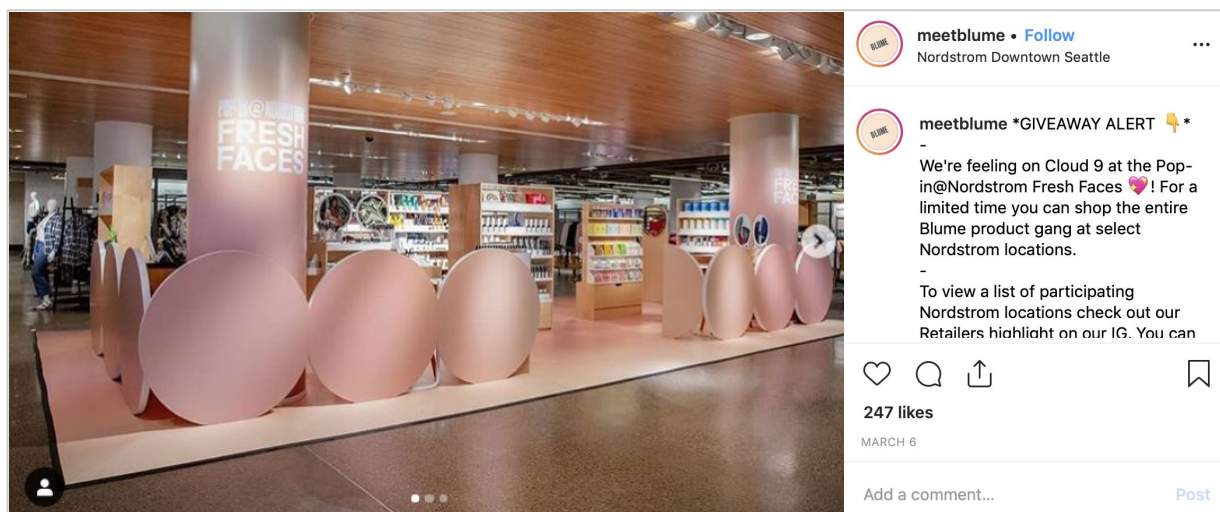
Visual Content

From photos, infographics, videos, there are many different types of content you can use to communicate your message. Here are a few types of visual content that we recommend:

Product Photos: Product photos are a great way to highlight new products to customers on social media, through display ads, and other channels. Innovative brands find ways to spice up their product photos by showcasing them in trendy locations or in use. Go outdoors, try product layouts in unexpected locations, play with lighting, and recruit people to pose for action shots with your products.



Behind-the-Scenes/Company Photos: With a little creativity, you can use behind-the-scenes photos that make your company more approachable - and help get your customers excited about new product launches and other news.



Aspirational Photos: Brands use aspirational photos to highlight a lifestyle that meshes with their products and connects to their consumers. These range from travel, to interior design to even a relaxed outdoor oasis.



Inspirational Quotes & Graphics: Another way to use visual content is to infuse your Instagram feed with inspirational quotes and graphics. These can be as simple as a motivational quote on top of a plain background or an image that would resonate with customers.

User-Generated Content: Brands also can use photos submitted by customers, either on their websites or social media platforms, to show how their product affects customers' lives and enhances their brand authenticity. This is a cost-effective way of getting visual content, and it also builds brand loyalty.

Videos: These can be as simple as a smartphone video—and most smartphones now have easy-to-use editing apps—or professionally shot. You can create a variety of different types of videos: documentary-style, animated, how-to videos, and so on. Video content can spur more customer engagement and can be a great way to showcase your brand's products and how they work.

Infographics: These can be a fun way to educate customers about product features (for example, the [anatomy of a great running shoe](#)) or interesting buying trends. Infographics include text and illustrations, and can be as simple or as intricate as you like. Online graphic design programs like [Canva](#) offer templates to help you create your own. Infographics work well on Pinterest and other social platforms, as they're easily shareable and engaging.

Into the Deep



As the world's largest recreational diver training organization, PADI wanted to connect and engage with both new and experienced divers. To do this, PADI enlisted AdRoll to test aspirational video ad content that brought viewers under the sea and highlighted the excitement of diving. The new approach worked: PADI saw a 6X increase in prospecting CTR and a 2.8X increase in retargeting CTR.



Written Content

Written content covers blog posts, listicles, how-to articles, and more. What you'll create depends on the themes you've identified. For example, if you're a retailer, you might write a blog post before the winter holidays on choosing the perfect gift for your mother-in-law. Engaging written content keeps your existing customers coming back to your website for advice. This boosts engagement, improves SEO (search engine optimization), and increases the likelihood that they'll continue buying from you. If you're struggling with your written content, here are a few things to keep in mind.

How long should my content be?

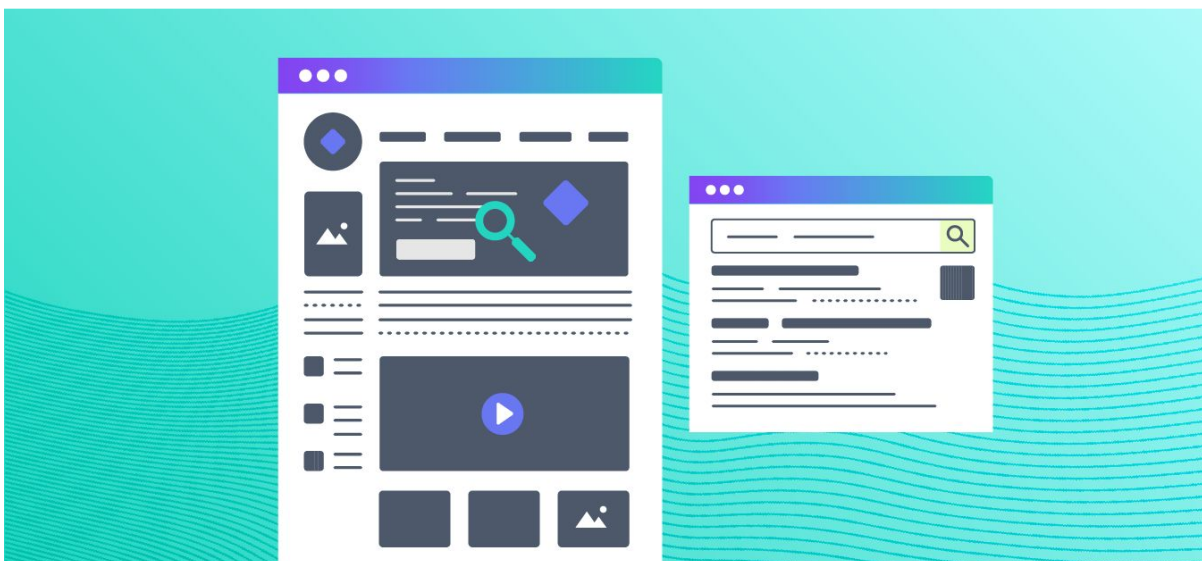
Depending on the content and your goals for it, content length can vary. Generally, though:

- 1 | Any content needs to have [at least 300 words](#) on the page for search engines to view it as helpful. If you're writing blog posts, this is the bare minimum. Ideally, blog posts should be between 500 and 1,200 words.
- 2 | Content that you want to rank at the top of search engine results needs to be [approximately 1,890 words](#). It may seem like an arbitrary number, but an analysis of the top ranking content on Google shows that content over 2,000 words tend to drop off search results.
- 3 | Longer content like how-to guides should be between 3,000 and 10,000 words. [Content this long gets shared a lot more often](#). (Like the one you're reading right now!)

How can I make my content readable?

You want visitors to stay and read your content. Here are a few ways to make what you write more readable:

- 1 | Use short sentences and action verbs.
- 2 | Add sub-heads (mini headlines) into your longer posts to break them up.
- 3 | When you can, use bullet lists. Those are easily scannable.



How do I do this SEO thing?

SEO will help visitors find your content and your website. You can improve your SEO by:

- 1 | Using relevant keywords. Do some research on what your ideal customers are looking for when they fire up their browsers. Google's AdWords keyword planner can help you identify keywords that get a lot of searches but not a lot of competition.
- 2 | Writing for humans. Don't get caught up in "stuffing" your content full of keywords. Use the keywords throughout your copy, starting in the first paragraph or on the first line, as well as in the title. But search engines frown upon content that's full of keywords that do not make sense.

Finally, always include a call to action in your copy. Here are some samples:

- 1 | For more information, visit [www.\[yoursite\].com](http://www.yoursite.com)
- 2 | Learn more about our [awesome product] at [www.\[yoursite.com\]](http://www.yoursite.com)
- 3 | Click on the link below to buy now



Research Before You Ride

Serious cyclists do a lot of research before investing in a new bike. The bicycle brand Specialized created educational written content on different bike features, including aspects like ergonomics and materials used in bike frames. It crafted content geared toward bike maintenance as well. These written content efforts helped them boost customer retention rates by 7% and direct traffic conversions by 25%.

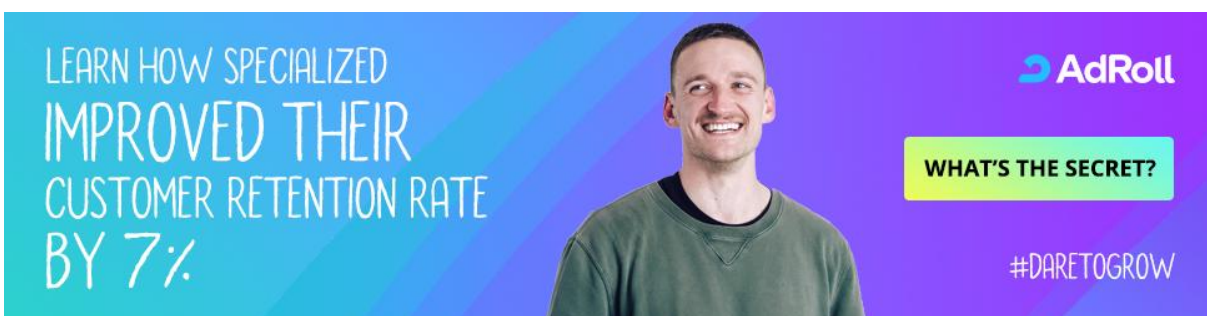
Ad Content

In addition to visual and written content, you can utilize several advertising options on social media and across the web. Each one lets you take advantage of different sizes and ad formats. Reach as much of your audience as possible by using as many formats and distribution channels as possible to test what works. So what kind of ads can you create?

Image ads are a great way to get started with online advertising. These ads use a static image along with some text. "Static" means that the image does not move - it's a photo, illustration, or other still image. Image ads work across different channels and devices. These are the most basic types of ads, and they're also the least expensive to create. Generally, image ads should always include your logo and a call to action.

What type of image you use depends on what you want your viewer to do. If you're using Image ads to build your brand, you might combine a catchy or memorable statement with a photo that makes it easy to imagine using your product, or how the product will make the viewer's life better. If you want visitors to click through to your website or sign up for an email newsletter, include a link to your website and use promotional copy that encourages visitors to act.

Example:



Native ads automatically adjust format to fit the environment where they show up so your ad blends in with the content your audience is viewing. For example, they can look like recommended content, such as a news story that's related to the article someone is reading on a website. One of the big benefits of using native ads is that viewers are [18% more likely to buy from them](#).

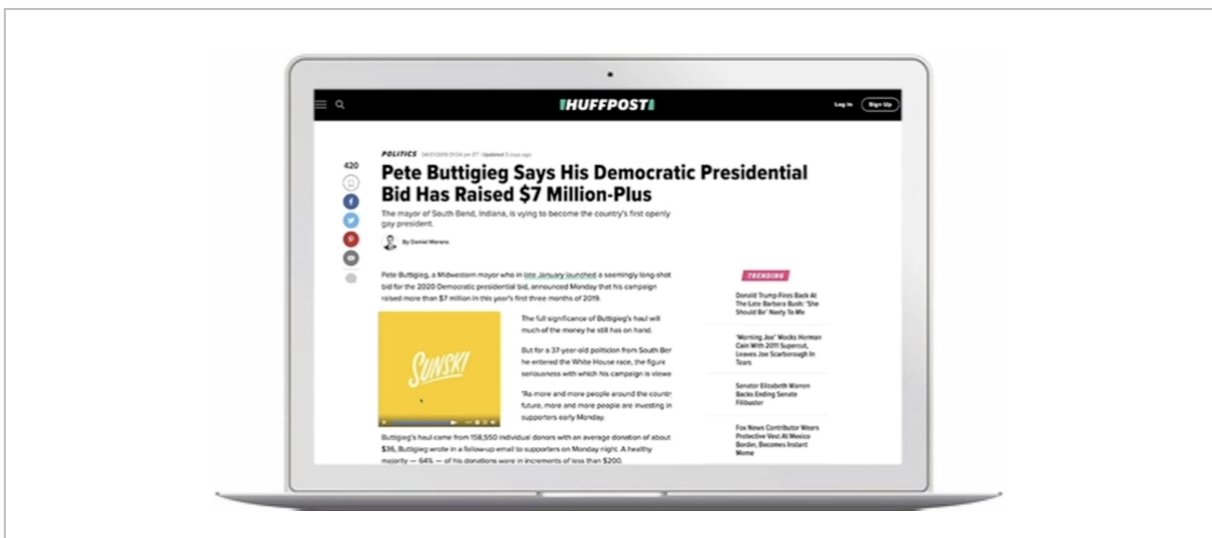
Dynamic Ads are ads that change based on who is viewing the ad. You can choose which products to show in your ads based on a visitor's previous behavior like a product they left all alone in a shopping cart or something they might be interested in based on something they bought recently. Dynamic ads can automatically scroll through products and promotions like a marquee or they can let a viewer scroll through to the products that are most interesting to them.

Example:



Video ads are very popular – and a lot easier to create than you think. You don't need big production teams, and you can turn static images into GIFs and video ads with apps that are already on your phone. Video ads are more engaging and more successful at creating a connection with an audience. In fact, [Invisia](#) found that viewers retain 95% of a message if they view it in a video, compared to 10% from reading the message in text.

Example:



Getting Started with Video Ads

Looking to create video ads? There are a lot of [great companies](#) out there, including AdRoll partners Lemonlight, VidMob, iMediaBay, and Vidbuild that can guide you through the process and create professional videos to attract customers. You need to keep your video ad short, time-wise, so you don't lose your audience's attention before the call to action.

Best Practices for Creating Ads

When you create ads, keep a few things in mind:

- 1 | Always include a call to action – what you want the person seeing your ad to do (visit your website, sign up for a free trial, save now, or buy now.)
- 2 | Use ads to tease a product, service, or promotion. Stuffing too much into one ad risks losing your audience’s attention before they take action.
- 3 | While you have a choice of formats for your ad, the size is much smaller than a web page. What fits on your home page won’t translate well to a banner ad, so you’ll need to be concise and to the point with your messaging.
- 4 | Be willing to test different ad types, calls to action, and other parts of your ads, which we’ll talk about in the next section.

This is only the beginning of what you can do with content: written, visual, and ad. As you continue to experiment with content, you’ll learn what works best for your audience and choose formats that better engage them.

The Roll-Up:

- 1 | There are a lot of different types of content assets you can create: visual, written, and ad content.
- 2 | Start with common themes to create more than one content asset.
- 3 | Visual and written content usually go together to create content assets.
- 4 | Consider testing image ads, native ads, and video ads when you’re starting out.
- 5 | Ad sizes and formats vary, but it’s important to be direct and to the point with your messaging because you have limited space.



07

Implementation and Testing

Your ads don't need to be perfect when they go live. A big part of marketing is to continually evolve, changing your messaging and the channels you use based on visitor reactions. You'll test your ads as you go. If you create something that you're reasonably happy with, pull the trigger and start promoting. You will change it later, since interactions with your initial ad will provide feedback you can use to iterate upon throughout your digital advertising journey.

Perfectionism Is the Enemy of Progress

Every marketing strategy involves trial and error, and content is no different. Holding up the release of a blog post, ad, or video to achieve perfection is unhealthy, since that doesn't exist. There's no way to accurately predict audience reactions to your marketing content. That's why you need to cultivate a mindset of testing and iterating – make small changes to your content and watch how your audience responds. Put your content out there, and if it isn't doing well, you don't need to spend a lot of money on it. Pay attention to the response you get, and work on improving your content. And test, test, test!

Basic Types of Testing

There are a few ways you can test your content, including landing pages, designs, and ads: A/B testing, multivariate testing, and multi-page funnel testing. Each can provide insight for your next wave of creating ad content.

A/B Testing

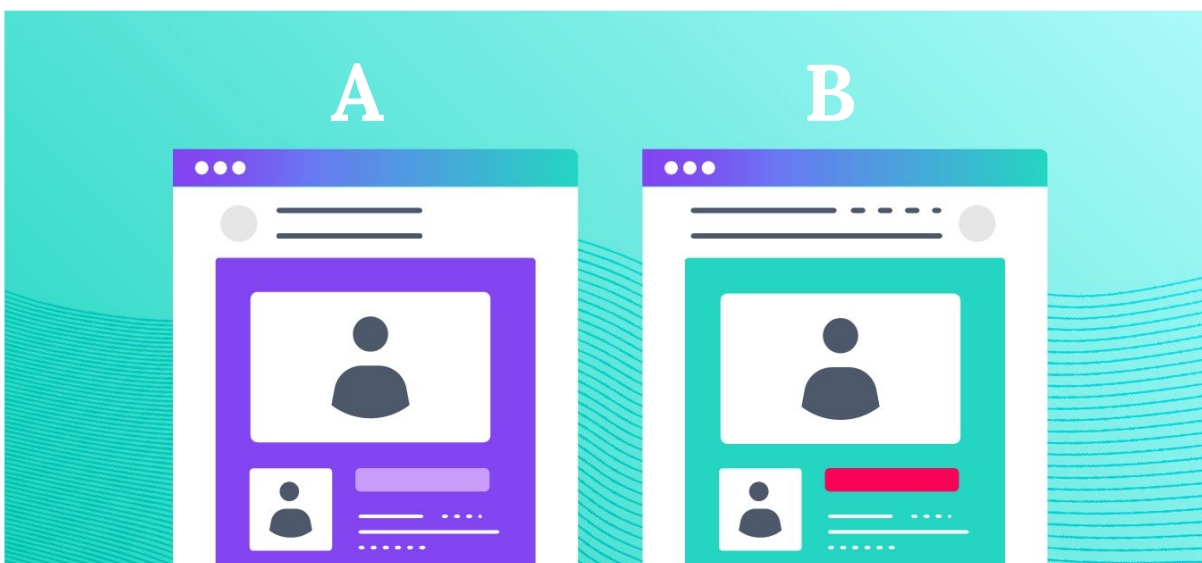
In A/B testing, you have one ad or piece of content. You duplicate it, only changing one aspect. Then you run both ads or pieces of content to see how your audience responds. This lets you see if the change makes a difference. Elements that typically change in A/B testing include:

- 1 | Email subject lines:** See what makes someone open an email or send it to the trash.
- 2 | Ad Copy:** Product descriptions or the content of an offer. You could test emotional copy in one ad versus statistics and logic in the other.
- 3 | Calls to action:** One could encourage your audience to sign up for a newsletter, while the other asks them to visit a website. Switching colors on your call to action button or text might create results as well.
- 4 | Images:** See what resonates more, a human face in a photograph or an illustration of your product. Typically, a human face looking at the camera increases emotional engagement, while an illustration appeals to a more logical side of the brain.

Multivariate Testing

Multivariate testing takes a similar approach to A/B testing for content. However, instead of just changing one part of the content, you change several parts to see how people respond to it. Let go of the idea that you're going to pinpoint what specifically changed your audience's reactions and just target more engagement with the content.

You might decide to run two ads. The first version uses the image of a human face, a call to action that says "Sign Up Now," and a red button to click. The second uses an illustration, a call to action that says "Learn More," and a gray button to click. You won't know exactly what got more users to click on one versus the other, but you will see different engagement rates.



Multi-Page Funnel Testing

Multi-page testing, also known as funnel testing, is like A/B testing in the sense that just one aspect is changed. However, it covers an entire purchase path on a website, from home page to shopping cart. Your site visitors are sent to either version A of your website or version B and see the same change throughout their visit. This lets you test the change that leads them to purchase something.

For example, version A could have all the “Buy Now” buttons in purple, and version B could have the “Buy Now” buttons in yellow to test which color gets your audience to buy.

Testing is an important part of marketing - and ultimately, growing your business. Don't be afraid to try something new to see what works better for your audience and helps you achieve your goals.

Review your ad performance regularly. What visitors respond to may change over time, and by regularly checking on how your ads are doing, you can make sure you evolve your ads to keep engaging your visitors.

The Roll-Up:

- 1 | Your ads don't need to be perfect before they go live. Some of the best ads have gone through multiple revisions to refine them. Testing is an important part of evolving your ads and seeing how your audience reacts.
- 2 | In A/B testing, you only change one piece of the ad and test both versions.
- 3 | Multivariate testing means that you change more than one piece of the ad and test both versions.
- 4 | Multi-page testing, also known as funnel testing, tests one change made throughout a website.
- 5 | Testing is important because it helps you understand what resonates with your audience and gets them to buy from you.

08

Measurement

How do you know if your marketing strategy is working? By measuring the success of your marketing tactics against the goals you've set. Measurement uses metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs) to figure out how your efforts are impacting your business.

Measuring your marketing efforts is more than just figuring out how you'll define success for your marketing campaigns. It involves using powerful analytics tools that can help analyze your campaign data, figuring out what is actually getting visitors to buy, and making ongoing adjustments to your campaigns based on what you've learned about your customers.

Defining KPIs and Metrics

We briefly talked about defining metrics and KPIs in Section 4, when you were creating your marketing strategy. To recap, a KPI (key performance indicator) is a measurable value that shows how effectively you're achieving specific key business objectives. An example of a KPI is cost per acquisition (CPA), which is the total cost of a particular campaign divided by number of conversions.

1 **Cart Abandonment Rate (CAR):** This is exactly what it sounds like - how many visitors leave your site during checkout versus how many go through with their purchase. This lets you know if there's something in the checkout process that's turning off shoppers and making them leave, like limited payment options. You can calculate your cart abandonment rate with this formula: $1 - [(\# \text{ of completed transactions}) / (\# \text{ of shopping carts created with at least 1 item in the cart}) \times 100]$.

2 **Bounce Rate:** As the name implies, this KPI measures how many people take the exit ramp off your website after viewing just one page. This is a good indicator of whether the page you're leading traffic to is resonating with your target audience.

High bounce rates often indicate the visitor has had an unpleasant or irrelevant experience—in which case, you've got some optimizing to do. There are a few quick changes you can easily implement to reduce bounce rate. First, make sure the messaging and keywords from your ads, emails, and search terms match your destination landing page. Slow page load times can also increase bounce rates. Product pages that are not generating as much revenue probably lack pertinent information or appealing imagery.

- 3 Conversion Rate:** This is the number of visitors that took the action you wanted (like making a purchase) divided by the total number of visitors to your website. Other conversions you could track include a free-trial signup, new account creation, download, newsletter signup, or a product demo. Calculating this number helps you measure how effective your messaging is, and how successful your content is at convincing your visitors to take an action.
- 4 Cost Per Acquisition (CPA):** This is the total amount of money used on a set of ads divided by the number of completed actions attributed to an ad or campaign. You can use this to understand the direct revenue impact of your marketing campaigns and figure out how much ROI each tactic is providing.
- 5 Customer Retention Rate:** This is the percentage of customers you keep over a specific time period. To calculate, take the number of customers at the end of a period, like the end of the quarter, and subtract the number of new customers you acquired during the same period. That number is then divided by the number of customers you had at the start of the period and multiplied by 100. The formula would look like:

$\frac{(\text{\# of customers at end of period} - \text{new customers})}{(\text{starting number of customers})} * 100$ <hr/> $= \text{Customer Retention Rate}$	$\frac{(500 \text{ customers at end of period} - 350 \text{ new customers})}{175 \text{ starting customers}} * 100$ <hr/> $= 85.7\% \text{ CRR}$
---	--

To spur growth, companies need to increase sales through a combination of new and repeat customers. Keeping an eye on your retention rate can help you find opportunities to engage and upsell existing customers.

- 6 Return on Ad Spend (ROAS):** This KPI tracks how much money you make for every dollar you spend on ads. A positive ROAS means that you're making more than you're spending on ads. This metric lets you know if your marketing is working - or not, depending on whether your ROAS is positive or negative.

Customers Who Interacted with Brands

1+

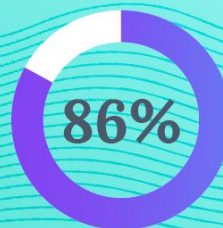
times before
purchase had a



higher average order value

11

times before
purchase had an



higher average order value

Understanding Attribution Models

As marketers, it's important to learn how your customers interact with your brand before completing an action or making a purchase. Enter: attribution.

Attribution is a method of marketing measurement that helps you determine which marketing touchpoints along the customer journey led to a conversion (ex: a purchase, download, or sign up). An attribution model is a set of rules that determines how conversion credit across is assigned different marketing touchpoints. Attribution models typically fall into two categories: single and multi-touch attribution.

Single-Touch Attribution

Single-touch attribution models are the most commonly used attribution models in part because there is a low level of complexity, and analytic tools like Google Ads and Google Analytics default to single-touch attribution models like last-click. These models assign 100% of conversion credit to one marketing touchpoint.

To help illustrate how each of these touchpoints are assigned different conversion credits depending on the model applied, we'll be referencing this example:

Let's say you sell studio quality headphones online. Now let's say that a customer sees a promoted ad on social, but doesn't click through. That same day, she finds your website by clicking one of your search ads. She goes to your website, but doesn't add any items to her cart. One week later she comes back again, after seeing an ad with a pair of headphones she was looking at the week prior. 3 hours later she returns again directly to your site and buys that same pair of headphones.

First-Touch

First-Touch attribution model assigns 100% of the conversion credit to the first impression that the user interacted before converting. In our example, the promoted social ad would receive all the conversion credit because it was the first marketing effort that initiated the customer's journey.

Last-Touch

Last-Touch attribution is the exact opposite of first touch. This model gives 100% of the conversion credit to the last channel the customer interacted with before buying. In our case the last interaction is when she went directly to your website.

First-Click

This attribution model is pretty straight forward. Here 100% of the conversion value is attributed to the marketing channel that the customer clicked before buying or converting.

Last-Click Attribution

Last-click assigns 100% of the credit to the marketing effort that a customer clicked before driving them to your website and converting.

A [study from digital marketing agency R.O.EYE](#) found that customers had seven brand interactions before they made an "optimum" online sale. These customer interactions happened across multiple channels, including Google AdWords, affiliates, display ads, blogs and forums, email campaigns, Facebook, and direct traffic. The study also found that customers who interacted more than once with a brand before purchase had a 25% higher average order value, and customers who interacted with brands 11 times before purchase had an 86% higher average order value.

Multi-Touch Attribution

Rather than assigning all the credit only to that last click before purchase, attribution models take into account all the actions a visitor takes before purchasing, enabling brands to better understand their customers' journey and optimize accordingly.

- 1 Linear**
Linear attribution models distribute the credit evenly. While this is a step-up from the single-touch model because it doesn't ignore any touchpoints, not all marketing efforts are created equal. This is a great model to understand all the marketing touchpoints along the conversion path.
- 2 U-Shaped**
This model allocates 40% of the credit to the first and last touchpoint before the conversion. The other 20% of the credit is divided between the marketing touchpoints that happened in between.
- 3 W-Shaped**
W-shaped attribution models assigns 30% of credit to the first touchpoint, middle touchpoint, and last touchpoint. The remaining 10% is divided evenly to the touchpoints in between.
- 4 Time Decay**
Time decay models assign credit across all your marketing touchpoints, but assumes that the closer the touchpoint is to the conversion, the more credit it should receive.

As a common practice, build your attribution model around your goals. Additionally, keep your lookback windows (a set period of time before your visitor bought something) in mind when applying credit. You'll want to see the last 28 days of your campaigns so you can take into account all the touchpoints before deciding on a model. Think of attribution modeling as an ongoing process to improve how you measure your marketing's impact on your business so you can spend your marketing dollars most effectively.

AdRoll 101: Attribution Dashboard

How do your customer touchpoints work together to effectively connect with your audiences and contribute to your bottom line? AdRoll's [attribution dashboard](#) takes into account all of the channels where your audience interacts with your company and shows you what path they take on their way to purchase. This helps you focus on the channels that lead to the fastest – and most profitable – conversions.

Analytics Tools

Now that you have identified some KPIs to measure, you'll need a way to make sense of them. Analytics tools can provide key insights, so you can see what's working and what's not. Given the numerous touchpoints buyers have on their customer journey, it's crucial to understand the impact of each interaction and adjust your investments accordingly.

There are a lot of tools you can choose from, but here are a few that we recommend:

Google Analytics

[Google Analytics](#) is one of the best-known analytics tools available. It comes in a free version (Analytics) and a paid version (Analytics 360). Both let you collect data across websites and apps and show key metrics such as where your site visitors come from and time spent on your site. Both of these products also grab data from Google Ads so that you can see how yours are performing. They can also be integrated with marketing platforms, like AdRoll, so you can easily manage and review all of your marketing KPIs in one place.

AdRoll Growth Platform

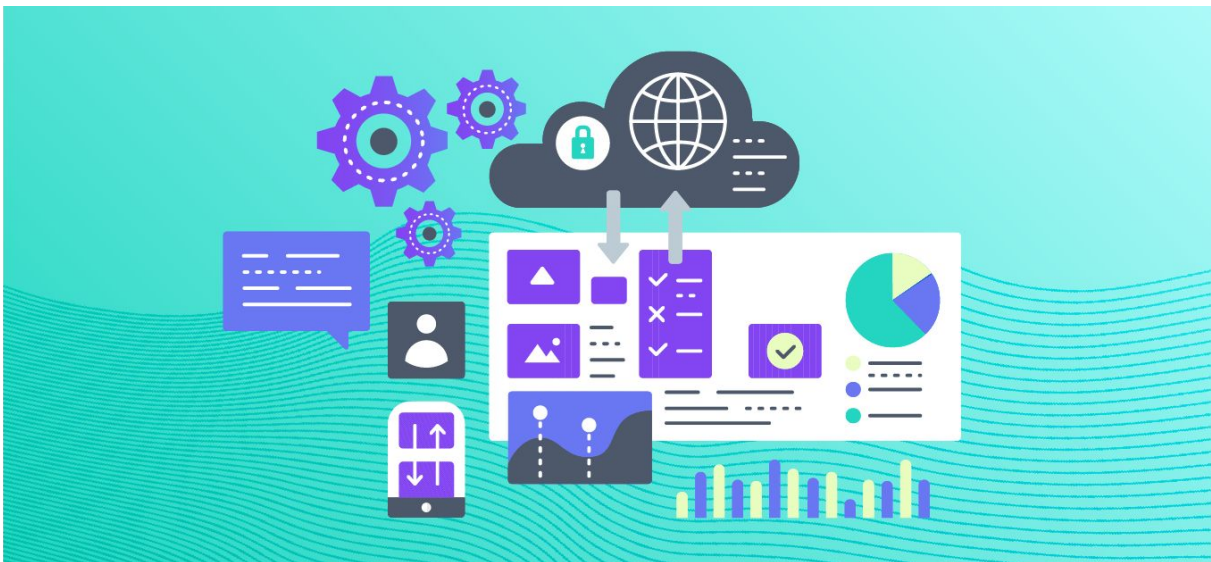
Many marketing platforms come with built-in analytics tools. Within the AdRoll platform are attribution and measurement capabilities that allow you to easily measure KPIs like cost per acquisition, conversions, and ROAS. Even setting up

your KPIs in AdRoll is easy; you just set up what a conversion looks like for you (filling out a form or buying a product) and how much the conversion is worth. AdRoll does the rest of the work to calculate whether or not you're earning money from your ads.

Conversions from websites can also be tracked with AdRoll by placing a small snippet of code (a pixel) on your site.

Moz

Moz is a tool best known for search engine optimization (SEO). SEO is the process of attracting more and higher quality web traffic by increasing how visible the website or the web page is to people using a search engine like Google. Moz lets you see where you rank for various searches, provides website page analysis, and inbound link data for measuring SEO efforts.



Test, Rinse, and Repeat

Marketing, much like creating a new product, is an ongoing process. You should test different marketing tactics on a regular basis to see what produces and continues to produce the best results.

You should also review and tweak your strategy over time to make improvements that will make your marketing more effective. When you find tactics that are working well, re-invest in those channels. And when you identify channels that aren't producing strong results, re-allocate that spend to test out a new channel or ad format.

The Roll-Up:

- 1 | Know the different KPIs and metrics you can use to measure success, and decide which ones you'll use based on the business goals you set in Section 4.
- 2 | Choose the analytics tool that best suits your business.
- 3 | Attribution models can help you pinpoint what led a visitor to buy. Pay attention to multi-touch attribution models to get a fuller picture of what led your visitors to buy from you.
- 4 | Continually testing your marketing tactics to provide the information you need to refine what you spend money on.



Conclusion

You've learned a lot about how to grow your brand, from how to find your ideal audience, to how to figure out what's making your visitors buy from you. Boosting your sales through marketing will take work, and by reading this guide you're already well on your way.

You've learned about where your ideal customers are online and what they need. You've also researched your competition and identified what makes you different – and therefore, more valuable to your customers.

This legwork is now the foundation for your marketing strategy: your positioning and your messaging. You defined goals that reflect your ambition, set a marketing budget that works for your company, and mapped how you'll measure success with your marketing. You picked tactics like digital ads, social media, and email marketing to reach your ideal audience. You created content, then tested it.

As your brand continues to grow, regularly use the data you get from your analytics tools to test and refine your marketing tactics and make better decisions. Learn what works and what doesn't, and use that to shape future campaigns. As you grow, you'll need to revisit your marketing strategy, and you'll be able to try more tactics as you pull in more revenue. Keep using and re-using the tips in this Ultimate Guide to Growth to cultivate your visitors and turn them into loyal customers.

The Big Roll-Up

To recap, here are the main takeaways to roll with as you step on the gas and grow your company:

1 | Create Your Ideal Customer Profile

The easiest way to understand your ideal audience and customer is to create a profile of who they are.

Knowing your customers' demographics is important as it can help you develop the right messaging that speaks to their needs.

Poll your customers to find out where they spend time online to ensure your spending your time and effort actually getting in front of them.

Put yourself in your customer's shoes to create empathetic messaging.

Use website analytics to find demographic and geographic information, learn how customers are finding you, and understand what your customers are viewing on your website.

Wigs.com

Online wig retailer Wigs.com knew it needed to really understand its customers for effective marketing. The company drew upon the experience of its CMO's mother, who had lost her hair during her battle with cancer. Her wig-buying experience only caused her more stress.

Wigs.com wanted to make its visitors feel heard and supported through a difficult time. With help from AdRoll, the company used what it knew about its core audience, women like the CMO's mother, to create digital marketing campaigns. The result was 50% more sales.

2 | Research Your Competitors

Competitor research and analysis is the process of taking a look at how your competition is positioning themselves in the marketplace, identifying their strengths and weaknesses.

Conducting competitor research and analysis can help you identify opportunities and threats in the marketplace, and refine your own messaging.

Include both direct and indirect competitors in your research.

Take a step-by-step approach to competitor research, and keep tracking your competitors' messaging over time.

Do a SWOT analysis to create a strategic framework for your marketing.

Sunski

Sustainable sunglass company [Sunski](#) learned that another competitor was successfully advertising on social media. To counter, Sunski used segmentation (which involves dividing audiences into different groups based on demographics, buying habits, or other parameters) to help personalize ads that were more relevant to each of their audiences. By better matching content to specific target audiences, they created better engagement and achieved a 2.4X return on investment on their campaign.

3 | Know Your Key Differentiators

Your key differentiators are what set you apart from the competition and are unique to your company: they make you authentic.

Small details matter when setting yourself apart from the competition. Don't try to differentiate based on technology and price; these are easy for competitors to replicate. Focus on how you can make your customers' lives easier.

Map your key differentiators to your ideal customer profiles when telling your story.

Claudio Lugli Shirts

[Claudio Lugli Shirts](#) goes beyond being an apparel retailer. The company believes that the clothes you wear should be as individual as you are. All their shirts include rich details that celebrate individuality, and they limit the numbers they sell so that you don't show up at work wearing the same shirt as your coworker. That's what sets them apart.

4 | Craft a Marketing Strategy

A marketing strategy is your roadmap for reaching new customers, connecting with existing customers, and growing your business.

Set an overarching goal for your marketing strategy, like increasing revenue by 10% in Q3.

To develop your positioning, identify your customer's pain points, pinpoint the specific value of your services, and determine what makes your business unique.

Use what you've learned about your ideal customers to create targeted messaging.

Decide how much you can spend on your marketing, and where you should allocate marketing dollars.

Define how you'll measure your marketing campaign success.

Topo Designs

Outdoor apparel company [Topo Designs](#) targets weekend warrior office workers by offering stylish and sporty-but-affordable apparel, backpacks, hiking gear, and accessories that transition easily from the boardroom to the hiking trail. Its positioning is simple: to produce well-designed apparel and gear that can be worn anywhere. And it reaches its audience with easy-to-understand, simple language that communicates product features, accompanied by colorful photography that highlights quality and style.

5 | Identify Your Marketing Tactics

There are numerous marketing channels and tactics that you can choose to use for your marketing: social media, blog content, email marketing, PR and media outreach, and digital advertising to name a few.

Use your business goals and budget to prioritize which you'll use.

Student.com

Student housing company [Student.com](#) set up a new Singapore based call center to tap into the Asian market - but couldn't hit its sales goals. To get its name in front of visitors, Student.com tapped AdRoll for help. Digital marketing tactics helped Student.com expand its online reach by 80% and the company boosted its website traffic and bookings. The tactics worked so well that Student.com expanded into Facebook and Instagram marketing as well.

6 | Create Content Assets

You can create visual, written, and ad content. Establish a common theme across all three types of assets.

Consider testing image ads, native ads, and video ads when you're starting out.

Ad sizes and formats vary, but you have limited space. Be direct and to the point with your messaging.

PADI

As the world's largest recreational diver training organization, PADI wanted to connect and engage with both new and experienced divers. To do this, PADI enlisted AdRoll to test aspirational video ad content that brought viewers under the sea and highlighted the excitement of diving. The new approach worked: PADI saw a 6X increase in prospecting CTR and a 2.8X increase in retargeting CTR.

7 | Implement and Test Your Ads

Don't let perfection get in the way of a good ad. Some of the best ads have gone through multiple revisions to refine them. Testing is an important part of evolving your ads and seeing how your audience reacts.

Testing is important because it helps you understand what resonates with your audience and gets them to buy from you.

In A/B testing, only change one piece of the ad and test both versions.

Multivariate testing means that you change more than one piece of the ad and test both versions.

Multi-page testing, also known as funnel testing, tests one change made throughout a website.

TeePublic

Online retailer [TeePublic](#) makes most of its revenue during the winter holiday season. The company knew it would need to target the right shoppers - and get them to buy. Using AdRoll's analytics, TeePublic could make immediate, on-the-fly adjustments to its campaigns. As a result, TeePublic smashed its initial holiday sales projections by 2x.

8 | Measure Success

Know the different KPIs and metrics you can use to measure success, and decide which ones you'll use based on the business goals you set in Section 4.

Leverage analytics tools, like Google Analytics, AdRoll's analytics tools, and Moz, to make sense of the metrics you've determined are important.

Attribution models can help you pinpoint what led a visitor to buy. Because consumer online purchasing habits have changed so dramatically over the last decade, last-click attribution doesn't provide a complete picture of the actions a customer took to get to a purchase.

Paying attention to multi-touch attribution models provides a fuller picture of what led your visitors to buy from you.

Continually testing your marketing tactics will provide you with information you can use to refine what you spend money on.

Topo Designs

Outdoor apparel company Topo Designs had to act fast. Its yearly revenues were very much tied to how many sales it made on Cyber Monday - and sales were not looking good. With 10 hours left to go, Topo Designs enlisted the help of AdRoll to bring in visitors, freeing up the brand to create a new promotion. As a result, Topo Designs hit its largest sales numbers to date - and could build on the success of its Cyber Monday campaign to deliver 7.6X ROI consistently.



AdRoll brings together everything ambitious brands need to grow: the insight to find the right audience, the reach to deliver the right message through more than 500 network partners, and the analytical tools to guide key marketing decisions. All of this adds up to more quality traffic, more sales, and more meaningful connections with customers.

To get started on your own path to growth, [sign up today.](#)