

10 Tips for Optimising Your Online Marketing

1. Set up analytics accounts and create benchmarks for comparison.

Ensure you have access to Google Analytics for your website (ask your web developer to set it up), Insights for your Facebook fan page and Email Management System analytics, as well as analytics for any other online channels such as Twitter (e.g. TwitterCounter) and YouTube. Extract a set of data that you can use to assess your progress and make comparisons in six months to a year.

2. Take the time to write an Online Marketing Strategy.

Use The Audience Connection's Digital Marketing Audit Process and Digital Marketing Planning Framework to guide you through the steps in a logical order. Turn your strategy into a series of clear action steps. Doing the hard thinking up front and having a documented plan will help you prioritise and focus.

3. Review your website from your user's point of view.

Make a list of all the typical tasks users would expect to complete on your website and give each of these a try, as if you were them. See where you hit barriers. Select some volunteers representative of each of your customer base and target audience segments and observe them as they use your site. Use Google Analytics to further prove the usability issues. Make a list of things that need changing and prioritise them in order. Then start making the changes.

4. Set up an email management system and integrate it with your website.

If you are still using Microsoft Outlook to send bulk emails, stop right now. Investigate the range of available email management solutions, e.g. MailChimp or CampaignMonitor. Small monthly fees make it affordable to use a system specifically designed to manage emails and provide you data from your campaigns. Request their sign-up code and give this to your developer to create a sign-up form on your site that feeds straight into your email management solution. This is all much easier than it sounds.

5. Write a social media plan and policy.

To be successful with your social media activity, you need to understand to whom you are speaking and where you will source the content for each channel. Write a social media plan that defines the target audience, tone of voice and subject matter for each channel, e.g. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube or blog. If delegating any aspect of social media management with others in the company, it is important to have a policy. That way everyone can feel confident that they are working to the same guidelines.

6. Don't feel pressured to do everything.

Pick the online marketing channels that are likely to have the most impact for you and your target audiences and focus on them first. Add new ones to the mix only when you feel there is a definite need and you have the others under control. Don't feel panicked to use every tool available to you. For example, many major organisations are deliberately holding off using FourSquare actively until it gains critical mass.

7. Treat your email communications as distinct, branded 'publications'.

If you have an e-newsletter give it a title, a set of regular, consistent features, a masthead and a distinct tone of voice. If you also send out e-flyers, make sure all follow a consistent recognisable style. Your readers will come to recognise and look forward to your communications and they will receive higher open rates.

8. Clean up your email sign-up processes.

Try signing up for email on your website and observe what barriers you face. Check that this most important call-to-action is positioned prominently as a 'persistent element' on every page of your site (typically fewer than 50% of visitors to arts websites enter via the home page). On the sign-up page itself, articulate the sign-up benefits and keep the process as simple as possible.

9. Track and measure everything and use the data to make improvements.

Set up a system of reporting that makes it easy for you to extract the right data on a regular basis. Feed the results in to your decision making process. For example, with your email programme, undertake A/B (split) testing on different offers and messages to see which gets the best result. Then send the most successful version to the entire database. Always test and analyse.

10. Streamline your processes to make it easy.

Make a weekly team meeting to discuss the next fortnight's social media. Make checklists. Use social media dashboards. Delegate particular tasks to individuals. Create distinct chunks of time when you are focusing on specific aspects of online marketing. This will help with that feeling of having too much to do.