



DIGITAL MARKETING
STRATEGY GUIDE

**HOW TO BUILD A
PLAN THAT WORKS.**

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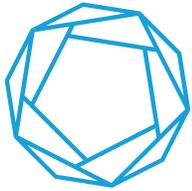


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*DON'T
BUY ADS!*
**BUILD A
MARKETING
STRATEGY.**

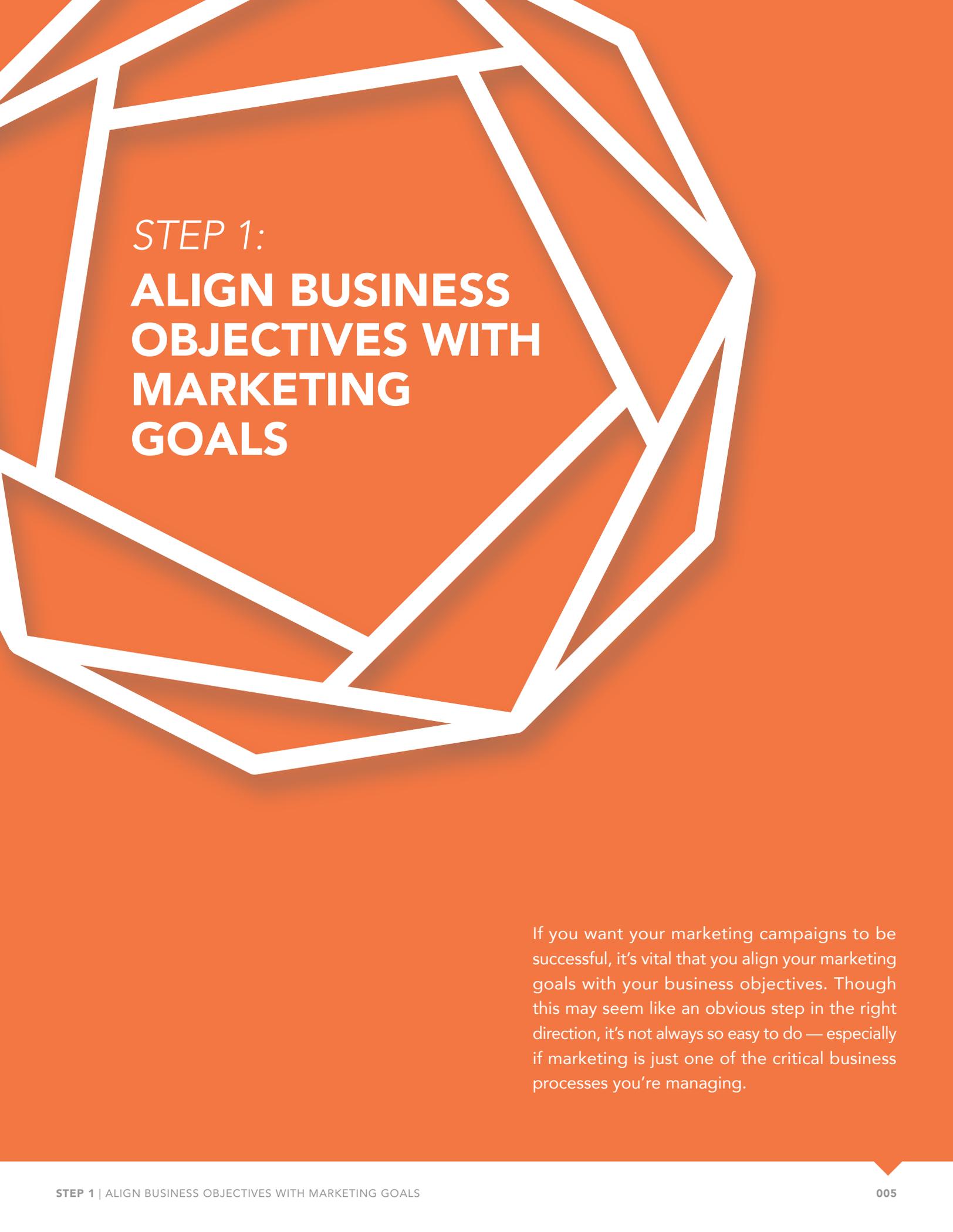
Anyone can buy digital ads, but advertising alone won't deliver results to help your business thrive. Any type of advertising — be it digital or otherwise — is not an insignificant investment, and it is one that should be part of a larger, cohesive marketing strategy. If you don't have a documented marketing strategy in place, how will you ever know what is working, if your investment is efficient, or if you're meeting your business goals?



READY TO START CREATING A MARKETING STRATEGY?

Digital marketing is powerful, and it has the potential to transform the way businesses reach new and existing customers, but it only works if you are targeting your ideal audience at the right time with a specific goal in mind. In fact, digital advertising is just the visible tip of the iceberg that is your cohesive marketing strategy. Before you can get to the fine detail of your digital strategy, you need to understand the elements that compose the rest of your strategic marketing plan.

We'll take you through each step of the process from developing your initial goals to reaching them. You'll get a grasp on what an effective digital marketing strategy looks like. And, more importantly, you'll be equipped with the knowledge necessary to develop your own strategy.



STEP 1:
**ALIGN BUSINESS
OBJECTIVES WITH
MARKETING
GOALS**

If you want your marketing campaigns to be successful, it's vital that you align your marketing goals with your business objectives. Though this may seem like an obvious step in the right direction, it's not always so easy to do — especially if marketing is just one of the critical business processes you're managing.



To get started, you need to identify what you are trying to achieve with your marketing. Are you launching a new product or service that needs awareness? Are you moving or opening a new location? Has foot traffic dropped off and you need to reverse the trend? Your goals will vary based on your market position, industry, and sales cycle, among other factors. For example, while a new technology company may be interested in increasing brand awareness in the local market, a more established clothing store may want to promote their new jewelry line to upsell to existing customers.





SELECT GOALS THAT MEET YOUR OBJECTIVES

Once you have identified your business objectives, you can begin to develop your marketing goals in line with satisfying your overall business needs. These goals will inform your marketing strategy and all of your tactics: from branding to PR to in-store merchandising to pricing to distribution to product development to advertising and communications. When you drill down to your promotional plan, there are different categories that your specific and measurable marketing goals may fall into:

INCREASE BRAND EXPOSURE

If your business is new to the community or is struggling against the competition, exposure and awareness may be one of your top goals. It's important to get the word out about your brand among local consumers.

PROMOTE PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

Whether you've got a new offering, seasonal goods, or a limited-time offer, timing is everything.

CONVERT AND NURTURE NEW CUSTOMERS

Some paths to purchase are longer than others. Your marketing has to capture interest and create value, especially with longer conversion cycles.

UPSELL CURRENT CUSTOMERS

Chances are, you want your customers to return and interact with your brand beyond the first sale. Targeted messaging can focus on upselling customers by providing suggestions for complementary or upgraded products and services.

CUSTOMER RETENTION AND LOYALTY

The more customers return to your brand and continue to make purchases, the better. When you encourage customer retention and promote brand loyalty, you'll build a strong local following.

BUSINESS POSITIONING

Keep your business top of mind and edge out competitors by positioning your business as an industry leader.



STEP 2:
**IDENTIFY
YOUR TARGET
CUSTOMERS**

Though you may have an idea of who could use your products and services, the best way to ensure that your marketing campaigns are targeted toward this population is to research your target market and develop buyer personas to inform all of your marketing efforts.



GET TO KNOW YOUR CURRENT AND POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS

Here are a few steps that you can take to start identifying who your target customers are and what they need or want the most.

LOOK AT YOUR CURRENT CUSTOMER BASE

If you want to get a better understanding of who your target customers are and what motivates them, start by looking at your current customers. Learn who they are, why they buy from you, and what their common interests and characteristics are. You can do this by looking at any customer data you've already collected, and learn even more using customer surveys

LOOK AT WHO YOUR COMPETITION IS TARGETING

After all, they're your competitors for a reason. Evaluating who they're currently trying to sell to can help you identify marketing opportunities. You may be able to find gaps in your current messaging or even go after a more niche market in need of your products and services.

CONSIDER DEMOGRAPHICS AND PSYCHOGRAPHICS

Don't just look at who could use your product or service, but also who is most likely to purchase it. Consider demographic factors like age, gender, income, education, occupation, and marital or family status. In addition, examine the psychographic data of your target customers to better understand their lifestyles, values, attitudes, and behaviors.



DEVELOP CUSTOMER PERSONAS

Once you identify your ideal customers, it's time to build customer personas that will help you better understand this target audience. Buyer personas are generalized, fictional representations of your target buyers. A typical buyer persona will include background information, demographics, identifiers, goals, challenges, and where your brand fits into the picture. After putting this information together, you can use it to ensure your digital marketing strategy and content are focused on reaching the right consumers.

Digital marketing allows for very fine precision when it comes to audience targeting, putting your messages in front of the right consumers — more so than any other advertising or communication medium. That's why identifying your target customers is essential to your digital marketing strategy.

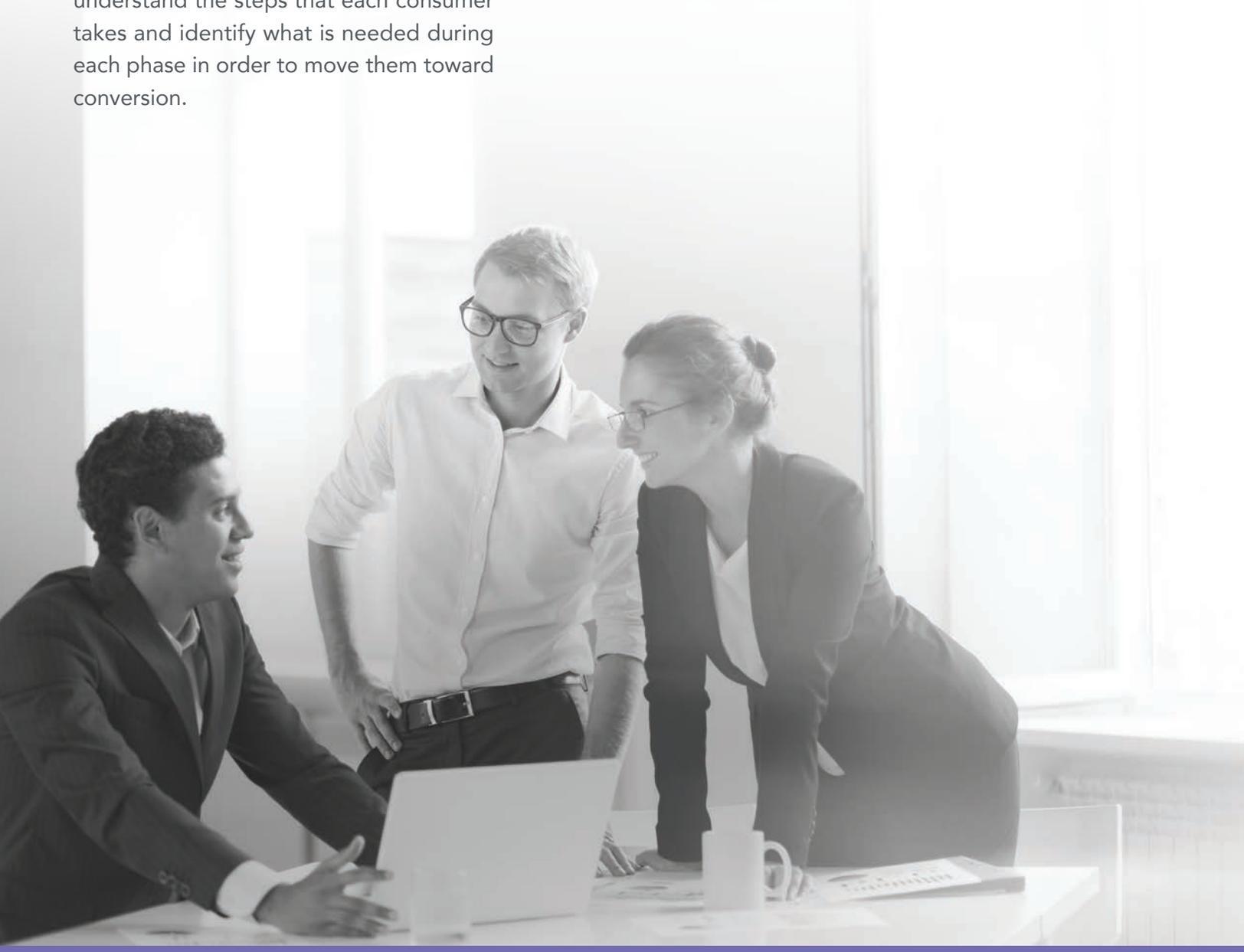
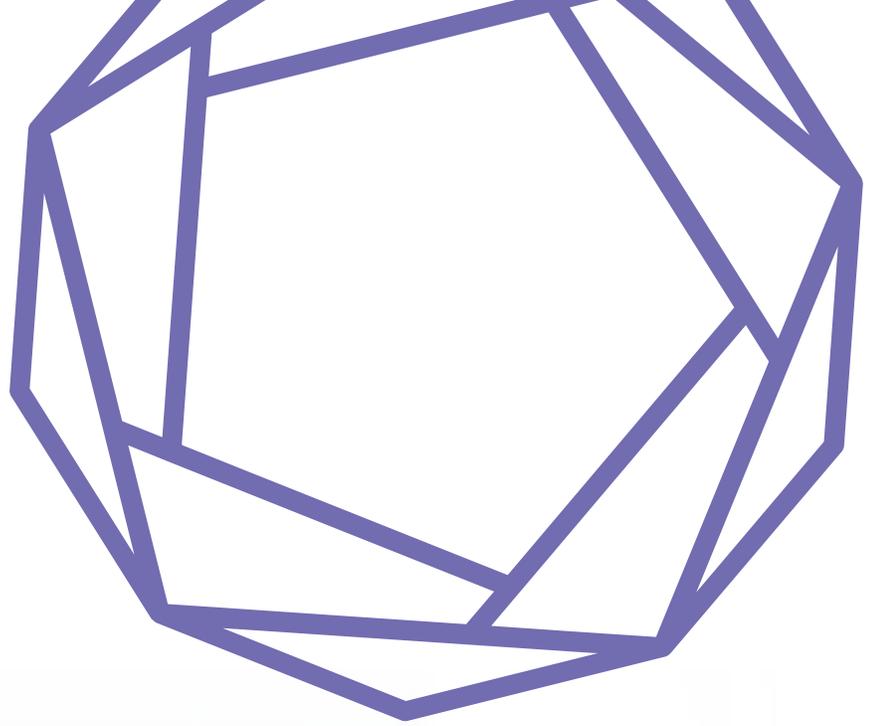


STEP 3:
**FIND THE
CONSUMER
JOURNEY**

There is not a single path to purchase for all consumers. They will move at different speeds and perhaps in a different order, but all go through the same gates before making a purchase. For example, without exposure and awareness, there's no way a consumer can make a purchase.

The key is to dig into typical paths and help create a direct line of messaging all along it. A buyer's place in this journey will impact their behavior. For instance, not every person who reaches your website is ready to make a purchase. Some people are just beginning to research potential solutions for their needs. Others, however, may have already researched possible solutions and are looking for evidence that your product or service is the best.

It's essential for local business owners to understand the steps that each consumer takes and identify what is needed during each phase in order to move them toward conversion.





UNDERSTAND THE PATH TO PURCHASE

The consumer journey has several gates or steps all consumers go through before converting and making an investment. Again, some steps may be skipped or done out of order; it is not a linear experience, thanks in no small part to digital.



1 EXPOSURE AND DISCOVERY

When the potential customer realizes they have a particular challenge or pain point, they begin doing research to find a suitable solution. Because you'll be up against a lot of competition at this stage, brand awareness is important. Your marketing should attract attention by focusing on the benefits of your products and services.

2 CONSIDERATION

Once the consumer has done their initial research, they will then narrow down their choices to a few brands and dig a little deeper into how each one may be able to fulfill their need. While comparing options, the consumer will be looking at features and factors that matter most to them. At this stage, your marketing content needs to break down your products or services and their features.

3 DECISION AND CONVERSION

The prospect has identified a solution and begins trying to justify this selection. If all goes well, this is the time that the consumer will make their final purchase. However, if they don't like what they see, they may revert to consideration. To keep your customers on track, you need to make the buying process as simple as possible.

4 CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP AND RETENTION

Once you have converted your prospect into a customer, now you need to focus on retaining them by nurturing the relationship. Provide content and communications that makes the customer feel fulfilled and happy, which will create brand loyalty and may encourage them to refer your product or service to others.



STEP 4:
**DEVELOP
TARGETED
MESSAGING**

Now that you know who your customers are and how they buy, it's time to talk to them. Great marketing messages aren't one-size-fits-all, they're tailored based on goals, target consumers, and buying-cycle stage. After all, you probably won't increase brand awareness and fuel discovery with Baby Boomers on Instagram, though that may be precisely how to reach your Millennial customers.



SPEAK THEIR LANGUAGE

It's not about using the latest slang or adopting an unnatural tone, it's about finding that right angle based on who they are and what they want. For example, the product features that are most likely to move a married Gen Xer from consideration to conversion may not be what motivates a young professional to buy.

BE CONSISTENT

It's not about being all things to all people, it's about developing messages that communicate who your brand is—and what it can do—to a variety of audiences. As you message and target messaging, don't lose sight of your brand identity.

INSPIRE THE DESIRED ACTION

Not every communication is about closing the sale, though that's your ultimate goal. Develop a variety of calls-to-action to move potential customers down the path to purchase and keep existing customers coming back.

PAIR THE MESSAGE WITH MEDIUM

Developing compelling digital marketing isn't as easy as converting a traditional ad, such as print, to a digital one. The content of your messages should be developed with tactics and channels in mind. This can be a simple matter of nuance or a more dramatic overhaul.



STEP 5:
**CHOOSE
THE RIGHT
TACTICS**

The last step in building your digital marketing strategy is choosing the right tactics. This is where everything comes together. You want to choose digital tactics that will help you effectively reach your target audience at the right points in their consumer journey in order to achieve your business goals. You may also want to pair these tactics with some of the more mass offline channels, such as print, broadcast, and radio, to create a comprehensive and integrated communications strategy.



DIGITAL PRESENCE COMES FIRST

If you don't have a well-maintained digital presence online, it doesn't matter how great your strategy — you'll still be wasting your money. Think of your website as your home base, it's where all of your digital advertising efforts will lead.

WEBSITE OPTIMIZATION

It's not enough just to have a website, you need one that is optimized to display well across digital devices, including smartphones and tablets. And it's important to consistently update your website to keep visitors engaged and coming back.

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION (SEO)

You want customers to be able to find your website independent of your advertising. Optimizing your site will ensure that your business appears high in organic search results on popular search engines such as Google.

Other channels that help boost your website's popularity and round out your digital presence include social media and local listings. These alone cannot sustain your local business, rather they are useful along different points of the

consumer journey and, ultimately, should funnel back to your website—remember, your website is the comprehensive experience for understanding your products, services, and offerings.

SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

Beyond offering another channel for digital advertising, social media networks offer opportunities for engagement and enhanced customer service. Take a look at your target customer demographics when considering which networks to pursue.

REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

Be sure to own your directory listing with sites like Google and Yelp. Ensuring your business is portrayed accurately online will not only improve your search ranking, it's also a great opportunity to extend customer service.



FIND FORMATS THAT REACH AND INSPIRE

When it comes to digital advertising, there's no shortage of formats, and they continue to grow and evolve. It's important to employ a mix of tactics to reach a variety of audiences throughout the consumer journey. Here's a snapshot of some of the most popular and why you might use them:

DISPLAY The online equivalent of print ads with the advantage of driving direct website traffic. Display is useful for creating awareness and reaching audiences at scale.

MOBILE Reach consumers anytime, anywhere on the devices that are always with them. Mobile is great for time- and location-sensitive messaging.

HIGH IMPACT These innovative ad units become a part of the user experience by employing site, sound, and interactive elements. High impact is about making a splash and are useful for product launches, big events, and other newsworthy messages.

DIGITAL VIDEO From pre-roll to longer form tutorials, video is a compelling medium to both increase awareness and create value. Video can wear many hats, depending on its placement: from awareness to education.

EMAIL This seasoned digital tactic is still going strong. Opt-in email allows you to send targeted communications to customers and prospects. Email works well for creating urgency, delivering special offers, and driving loyalty.





BRANDED CONTENT Also known as native advertising, this format allows your content to educate and inform consumers while blending in on the platform. Branded content is great for going deeper into your brand's story, driving engagement and consideration.

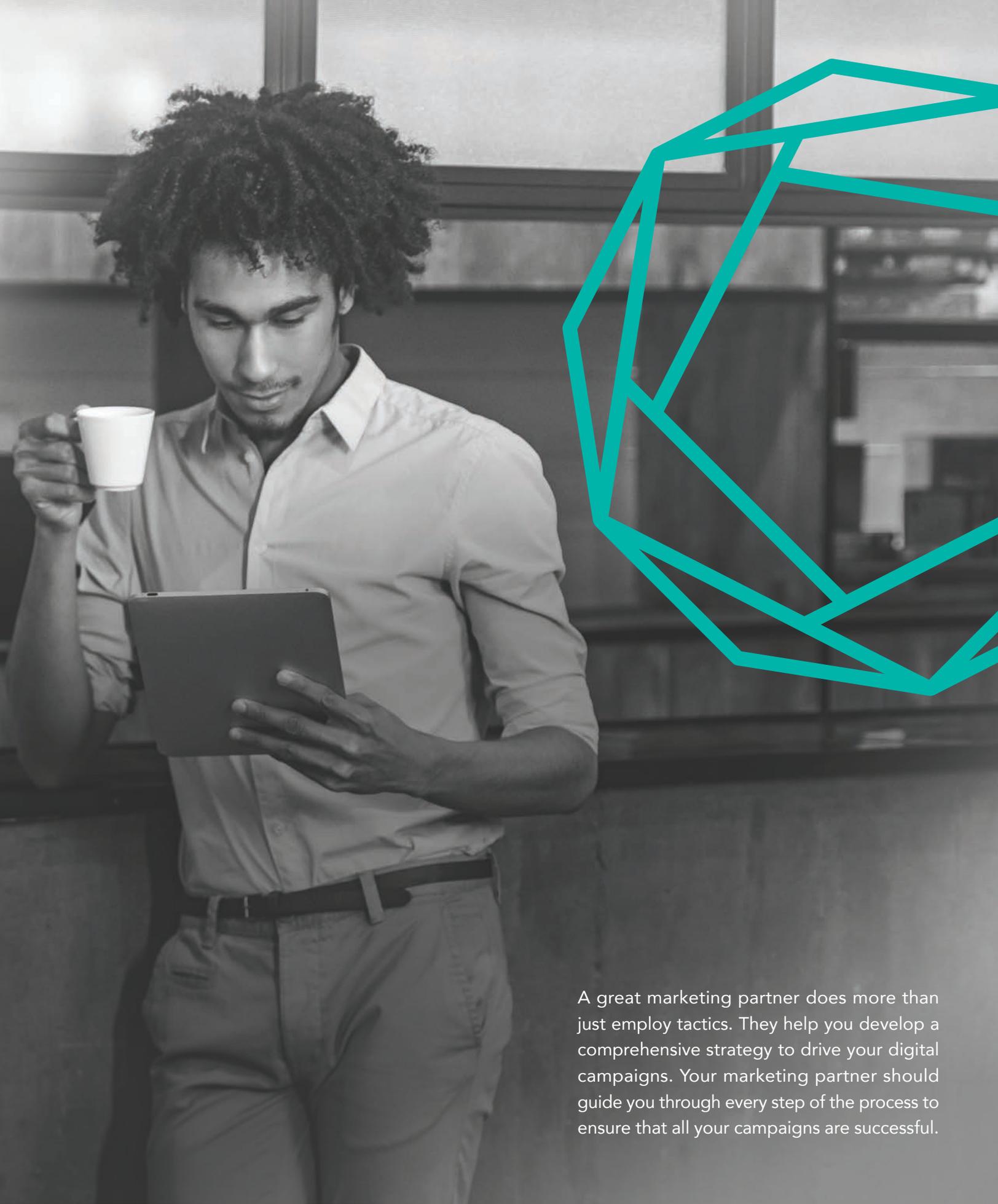
SOCIAL MEDIA From promoted posts to display ads, social media advertising can increase engagement and drive traffic to your website. Social media is best used as a loyalty platform, but it also works for building awareness with target audiences and showcasing content.

PAY-PER-CLICK (PPC) These ads appear above organic results on search engines, attracting more eyes. The best part is, you only pay for the ads consumers click on. You can think of PPC as fuel to get your SEO engine running faster. It drives consumers to your website but can be drilled down to specific positions within the consumer journey, aligning destinations on your website to prospective customers' needs.



SELECT A MARKETING PARTNER

Developing an effective and comprehensive digital marketing strategy takes time, resources, and certain expertise. If you don't have a dedicated marketing team in-house, it may be time to find a marketing partner who can help you improve the overall effectiveness of your digital marketing campaigns.



A great marketing partner does more than just employ tactics. They help you develop a comprehensive strategy to drive your digital campaigns. Your marketing partner should guide you through every step of the process to ensure that all your campaigns are successful.



WE'RE THE EXPERTS YOU NEED

If you're ready to stop wasting money on ineffective ads and start developing more successful digital marketing campaigns, it's time to call in the experts.

When you choose us as your marketing partner, you gain access to a wealth of national insight and resources that can make your local business rise above the competition. We would love to partner with you and help develop a comprehensive digital marketing strategy that drives better results.

Contact us today for a free digital marketing consultation.

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