

COLUMNS

3 steps to effective customer acquisition using digital marketing

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By A LUXURY DAILY COLUMNIST

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More than half of U.S. small businesses spend \$1,000-plus on local advertising without first having a predefined customer acquisition strategy in place, according to an annual SMB AudienceSCAN study.

Which, quite frankly, is crazy.

If you do not have a strategy in place before you begin, you might as well be throwing your money away. The most important aspect is having your message aligned with your audience to ensure that your marketing matches with the customer's purchase intent.

With the above in mind, here are three easy steps to get you started using digital marketing for customer acquisition.

Step 1: Know your audience

This may seem obvious – how can you market at someone you do not know? – but when you consider how many businesses do not have a strategy in place, it is not a big stretch to imagine how little research they do into the purchasing behavior of their customers.

How you define your audience is essentially the foundation of any good digital marketing strategy, so it is now time to become your customer's best friend and confidant.

Customers use digital channels for a whole range of different aims, and each category can be given three or four broad characteristics.

Take customers in search of furniture online as an example. Research from AudienceSCAN reveals some compelling statistics about this particular group:

- They are 35 percent more likely to have a Pinterest account
- Sixty-one percent have used their smartphones to compare prices online
- Two-thirds already have a business or brand in mind

This shows us that a customer looking to make big purchases relies on digital marketing predominantly for inspiration and value.

If you are not on creative channels such as Pinterest, you might be missing out on a lot of customers.

Take action: Create a well-defined profile for your typical customer. Once you know where they go, and why they go there, you can begin to craft a personalized strategy.

Step 2: Identify your customers' channels

The temptation to be everywhere when marketing your business is high, and the logic is sound.

If you are on every channel that must increase the amount of potential customers seeing your products, right? Probably not, actually.

Based on the customer profile that you created in the last step, identify the top three or four platforms that your customers are most likely to frequent.

For example, if you sell stair lifts, Facebook – with its relatively young audience – probably is not your best marketing channel.

By limiting yourself to just a few choice channels, you will be able to pour your energy and resources into those platforms. This means you avoid spreading yourself too thin and having a poor presence on all the channels.

This strategy allows you to hone in on what marketing strategy will make customers not only find your product but also want to buy your products.

Take action: Identify three top channels based on your customer profile. Different channels need slightly different strategies, but your customer profiles will steer you in the right direction.

Step 3: Collect data

Without data, you will not be able to assess anything when it comes to your acquisition strategies. Which campaigns did well? Which channel brings the most new customers?

Fortunately, these all-important questions can be answered if you have a little bit of a data and a whole lot of analysis.

Using tools such as Google Analytics, SproutSocial or MailChimp can give you fantastic insights into the behavior of your customers, enabling you to fine-tune your acquisition strategy even further.

Take action: Link all of your marketing materials to an analytics engine.

When you next send out a newsletter or post to your social media account, link it up to a reporting system and take the time to examine the data and draw conclusions that influence your future marketing efforts.

THE MAIN AIM connecting all three of these steps is linking your brand to your customers' buying intent.

Know who your customers are and where they go to find what they want, meet them there with the most compelling and persuasive message you can muster, and then analyze the results.

With this simple formula – along with some persuasive flair – your customer acquisition strategy should be well on the way to connecting you with new consumers.

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