

COLUMNS

5 W's of digital marketing

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Luxury Daily

I am always surprised by how early winter clothing starts popping up on the racks in department stores. Starting in August – and sometimes as early as July – I have seen winter scarves, hats and Christmas decorations in the aisles alongside Back to School sales.

But while I pine for summer vacations and sunny days, I know too well that, living in Colorado, cold weather will be here before I know it. So I stopped by the rack of hats next to the school supplies.

When the hat slid down over my eyes, it was obvious – one size does not fit all.

The same is true for your digital advertising.

Sizing up

As a young, married working woman, I am often served ads for household products, baby diapers and jewelry. And these things make sense – I fit the demographic for consumers interested in these products.

But when I see an ad for erectile dysfunction medication or a “Hot Singles near You!” dating application, something seems amiss.

There is no one-size-fits-all strategy for mobile marketing and online advertising.

With so much information about consumers readily available online, it is just waiting for your marketing department to tap into the resource.

When you know who your ideal customer is, you can build a marketing message intended just for them.

Knowing your customer

It can take years to fully understand your customer base, but you can start by identifying your ideal customer.

Build a customer profile or buyer persona, and use this as a guideline for all of your marketing activities. Where do you start? Try these three categories:

- Demographics: How old are they? Where do they live? Are they primarily men or women?
- Psychographics: How do they feel about your product or service? What are their religious or political beliefs? What makes them happy or sad?
- Behavior: How do they spend their time? What are they talking about online? What are their interests or hobbies?

Asking these questions only grazes the surface, but it will point you in the right direction. It takes deliberate effort and reflection to fully understand your customers.

A good marketing company or consultant will help you learn the right questions to ask, and how to find the right answers.

Using this knowledge to build ads

When you have a highly specialized product or service to offer, you do not want to advertise it to just anybody. If you do, you are just wasting your marketing budget to show your ads to people who are not interested and do not care about your offer.

- If you own an auto repair shop, you do not want to attract the bottom-feeding price shoppers. You want to bring in customers looking for car care advice and interested in a long-term relationship with their mechanic.
- If you own a vegan restaurant, you do not want to serve someone who is looking for steak and potatoes. But you might want to attract a person who discusses organic products and “likes” vegetarian recipes page on Facebook.
- If you sell adult diapers and life alert products, you do not want to show your ads to teenagers on Instagram or Twitter. But you might want to attract adults taking on the role of caregiver for their aging parents.

It starts with understanding your customer base, but it does not end there.

Once you decide who you want to target, you need to establish what your message will be, and when you want them to see it.

Targeting with the 5 W's

Who: Up to this point, I have focused on the “who” because this is arguably the most important factor for building effective marketing. Targeting the right customer comes from understanding your customer base.

Once you have answered this question, the same information can be used to target your ads. Demographic information leads to hard statistical targeting, while psychographic information can be reflected and targeted in their interests, activities, and opinions online.

What: Crafting the right message takes practice, but again comes down to understanding your customers. What do they value? What language will resonate? What will make them act?

When: It does not make sense to run a click-to-call campaign after business hours when no one is available to answer the phone, just like it does not make sense to advertise swimsuits when kids are headed back to school.

Where: Are your customers on Facebook? Run social ads. Do most of your clients come from online searches? Consider AdWords. Are they being referred from other Web sites? Try content marketing. The secret to getting in front of your customers is knowing where they are spending their time.

There are many platforms available to target your audience, from search to social, email, display and media buying. You can even create specific ads based on device – are your customers looking on smartphones? Some ads cater better to mobile devices, some to desktop.

Why: What are you trying to accomplish with your marketing? If you want more followers on Facebook, the strategy looks completely different than if you want to drive sell products online or drive traffic to your Web site.

YOU SHOULD NOT take a one-size-fits-all approach to advertising.

When it comes to effective marketing, you cannot even rely on one-size-fits-most techniques. Your business is unique. Your customers are unique. The things that work for your neighbor might not work for you.

Here is the secret: Know your customer.

Ask the right questions, consult a marketing expert and do your research to learn everything you can about them.

Think about the ways you can target online, and adjust your marketing for your customer. Build a strategy that will fit your business.

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