

MARKETING 360: DEVELOPING AN INTEGRATED MARKETING PLAN

*How a multimedia platform can drive
the success of your business*

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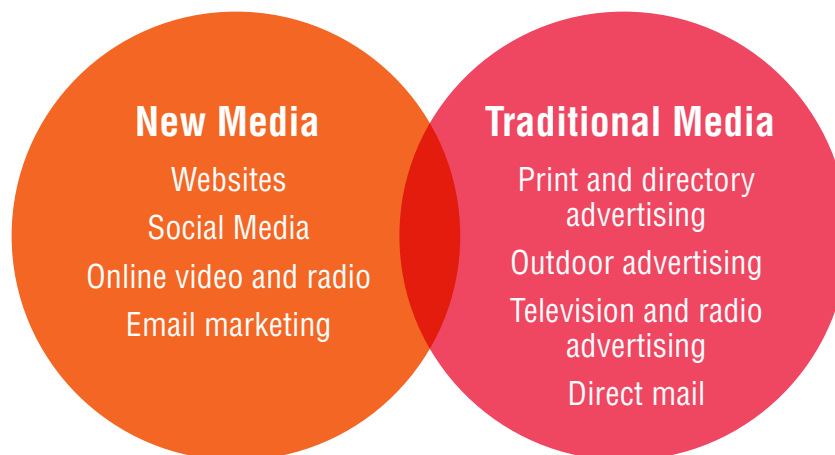


METRICS
REPORTS

If you've ever heard a good piano player, you know that a solo act can create beautiful music, pleasing everyone within earshot. Now, combine the piano with a guitar, vocalist, saxophone, and a few other pieces. Suddenly, you have a richer, more powerful sound.

Similarly, marketing tools may produce one level of results when used alone or independent of each other. However, when you combine the tools into an integrated marketing plan—a cohesive symphony of marketing efforts with coordinated timing and consistent messaging—the synergy increases results dramatically. The explosion in new media combined with more traditional promotional platforms means that there are more opportunities than ever to create strategic integrated marketing plans.

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And more companies are hitting the right notes. A 2008 report by the Direct Marketing Association found that there is a distinct shift toward adding email and other digital media, even as offline media retain their importance:

- Nearly 76 percent of respondents are using more email than they were three years ago.
- Nearly 63 percent are using more search engine marketing.
- More than 61 percent are using more online video.

Two key factors drive these trends: First, marketers are following the consumer. According to a March 2010 report by The Nielsen Company, 60 percent of consumers simultaneously watched television and used the internet at least once a month. Online video consumption is up 16 percent from the previous year. And exposure to ads across various platforms has a synergistic effect—Nielsen found that when consumers were exposed to pharmaceutical ads both on television and online, they were 100% more likely to ask their doctors about them.

Second, sophisticated analytics allow marketers to measure the effectiveness of campaigns through click-throughs, codes, dedicated telephone numbers, and other tools to help them understand which messages and media are working. The ability to prove results means more reinvestment in what's working.

Better accountability and tracking, higher retention and effectiveness in persuading customers to buy, and more personal engagement with customers are just a few of the drivers behind the overwhelming popularity and impact of integrated marketing campaigns. But before you can build your own integrated marketing campaign, you first need to understand the individual components and how you can make them work for your business.

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Marketing Tools You Can Use

So how do you get started building your plan? First, you have to understand some of the tools available to marketers as well as their advantages. Some options you might consider include:

- **Website and Search Engine Marketing (SEM).** It can be difficult to create an online presence without an effective custom website that supports other marketing efforts—this is an important investment as the online face of your business. At the same time, search engine marketing has become increasingly important.
 - Gather feedback from clients and others who know your business to ensure that your site is organized well for their purposes.
 - Update your website regularly with relevant content and work on building links to and from other sites to boost search engine rank.

According to a 2010 study by web analytics firm Compete, three out of five consumers “always” or “often” search online before conducting a purchase. Only 6 percent of consumers do no research prior to making a purchase.

- **Print advertising.** Print publications, including telephone directories, allow businesses to target specific audiences by interest, geography, and other factors. When considering print publications, look at how well they reach people who wish to read your message as well as how relevant your business is to those readers.
 - Check out the publication or directory’s website for information about its audience, reach, and cost to compare it with your target audience. If it’s not available there, contact the company for more information.

- Look for cross-promotional opportunities offered by the publication, such as website promotion or event opportunities.
- Print, especially directory advertising, can often reach customers for a sustained period of time, providing information immediately when they're ready to buy.

According to the Yellow Pages Association, as many as 96 percent of homes have at least one telephone directory.

- **Online advertising.** Online advertising grew even during the economic downturn and is projected to maintain double-digit growth through 2014, according to electronic marketing firm eMarketer. That's because online advertising can be used to target customers with great efficiency, often at a lower cost than traditional media.
 - Ask the online media representative how the site is promoted, and what kind of traffic you should be able to expect.
 - Look at how other advertisers are converting their leads to customers, and work with your representative to develop a plan for doing the same.
 - Take advantage of free directory listings. For high-traffic sites, consider upgrading your ad to get the most benefit.
- **Direct marketing.** Direct marketing sends a message directly to the consumer via mail, catalogs, email, telephone, and other vehicles. These forms of marketing can be instrumental in your integrated marketing efforts. This is especially true when your general advertising is supplemented by direct outreach that offers a promotion or reinforces your brand message. Use direct marketing for highly targeted campaigns built on demographics, previous buying habits, and various opt-in lists.

- Consider supporting more broad-reaching marketing efforts with a direct marketing push to your best prospects. This kind of frequency and specialized message can increase your success rate and boost customer loyalty.
- Direct marketing tactics that suggest customers visit micro-sites or landing pages can be particularly useful, imparting a short message and then providing more information when the customer chooses to seek it.
- **Social media marketing.** LinkedIn. Facebook. YouTube. MySpace. Twitter. Foursquare. Blogs. Where should busy owners and managers spend their time? It's useful to explore each of the sites and get an idea of their tone and benefits. Social media can support other campaign elements in various ways. It also allows you to listen to what your customers are saying about you and to start speaking directly with them.
 - Consider special offers and rewards for customers who follow, "Like," or otherwise connect with you through various social media.
 - Location-based social media like FourSquare encourage customers to announce when they've arrived at a place of business, promoting that business name whenever they announce their location to friends. The "check-in" process allows the business owner to offer incentives and rewards to loyal customers. Be sure to monitor who's checking in at your place of business and recognize customer loyalty, if it's appropriate for what you do.

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- Use your traditional media vehicles to encourage customers to connect with you on your social media platforms, where you can engage with them more directly.

Nielsen reports that, in December 2009, more than 142 million people in the U.S. spent an average of six hours a month using social media sites like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube—up 82 percent year over year.

Six Steps to Creating Your Integrated Plan

Now that you have an overview of several effective tools, it's time to combine them into a plan. As you consider each tool, ask yourself how it will help you reach your prospective customers. Also, how can you integrate them with other resources at your disposal? For example, a "Like" page on Facebook, which allows customers, influencers, and others who appreciate your business to connect, can be a great place to direct people to your website or to hold contests and promotions. Direct mail can be used to target customers in ways that are very specific or very broad while testing messages and directing people to a landing page on your website that has more information about your business or about any offers. Directory advertising is directional, reaching people at the point when they are looking for a specific product or service. Together, various tools can work in concert to create an even greater impact.

1. Review Your Goals

Marketers should look at the ideal end results and state those goals in reasonable, measurable terms. It's not useful to say, "I want to increase awareness" because that can mean many things. Instead, look at your business and what you need to accomplish:

- Do you need to increase traffic to your website by 15 percent over the next six months?
- Do you need to generate 10 percent revenue growth over the next year?
- Do you need to find more leads per month or per quarter? How many?
- Do you want to decrease abandoned shopping carts or unclosed deals by 25 percent over the next two quarters?

Those are all specific, measurable goals that give you a strong foundation on which to build your marketing plan. And don't have too many goals or your plan may become unfocused. Two or three, at most, is usually ideal.

2. Choose the Right Tools

With all of the options you have at your disposal, it's important to choose the right tools for the job. Ask yourself:

- How well does this reach my intended audience?
- How well does this support the goals that I've set for the plan?

Even within the same budget, different businesses may have wildly different media mixes. The more you customize your mix to suit your business' goals, the more successful you'll be.

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The decisions may not always be easy. For example, it may be tempting to splurge on a cable television buy, but if that will preclude other activities that could reach your audience more effectively, it might not be the best choice. On the other hand, if you're a regional business trying to reach a broad audience in the local market, pairing regional television spots with some directory advertising and, perhaps, online video, could be a home run.

In some cases, it might make more sense to focus on a targeted online campaign, social media, and some niche, category-related online and print advertising or direct marketing. With that kind of plan, you're finding a more defined audience and reaching them multiple times, increasing the likelihood that they will remember your brand. Your choices will be based on the audience you're trying to reach and the effectiveness of various media vehicles in delivering them.

3. Consider Your Budget

Once you've created a "wish list" of the tools you want to use, you need to compare them to the amount of money your business has to spend on marketing. During tough times, marketing is often the first area of the overall budget to be cut, but this is usually a mistake. Investing in marketing is most important during times when a company needs to generate business.

But how much should you be spending? The way companies set their marketing budgets is as varied as their individual marketing plans. Some choose to allocate a percentage of sales or revenue—each of which will vary significantly based on the size of the company—while others have a fixed annual budget that changes little from year to year. According to a report published by the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE), consumer products companies may spend 50 percent of net sales in their first year,

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moving to a steady 8 to 10 percent after that, while retail stores may spend 4 to 6 percent of net sales. Other types of companies may spend more or less. Some companies, such as seasonal businesses, need to spend most of their budget during a short period of time, while others need a steady drip of messages on a regular basis to compete.

4. Coordinate the Components

Once you know what tools you'll use and how much you have to spend, it's time to put together the plan. Allocate your dollars across the platforms you're going to use and within the specific time frames you need them.

As you create your plan, it's essential that your messages and look remain consistent to get the most benefit from integration. If you have one message and look in your traditional media, another for your online video, and a third for your online marketing, you're going to find your efforts disjointed and less effective. At the same time, if the efforts have the same look and approach, your business will benefit from the frequency and increased brand recognition generated by the campaign.

Finally, look for ways that the campaign components can work together. Include your website and social media addresses in your traditional advertising and direct marketing efforts. Construct landing sites to support your online advertising's special promotions and messages. Use social media to remind customers about a coupon or feature story about you appearing in a high profile magazine. Link your plan components wherever you can.

5. Measure and Refine

While all media is measurable in terms of its reach and impact, integrating online and offline efforts gives marketers more powerful and specific tools to quantify success. Traditional media have often been measured through awareness, impressions, and

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other metrics, using tools like coded coupons and special telephone numbers to track responses, in addition to tracking reach and frequency of each effort. When offline efforts are integrated with online efforts, target audiences can be sent to specific landing pages with offers or customized content. Traffic on those pages is a very clear indicator of how well the medium and message motivated prospects to take action.

Email campaigns, coupon codes, and data collected through online forms in exchange for a special offer can also be valuable methods of measuring a program's success and gathering more information about customers. Marketers can easily send different offers to various test email lists or use different messages in various online advertising venues to evaluate which messages pull better. This can be done at far less cost than using traditional print or direct mail media. Email service providers can deliver reports on the rates at which emails are opened by recipients, as well as how many actually click through to the site.

Online analytics services can tell you which keywords customers are using to find your site, which sites or sources are directing them to yours, and how traffic patterns change across the pages of your site. It's critical to monitor your analytics and find out what's generating traffic and sales. If you build a landing page on your website that is only promoted through a specific campaign, you know that the traffic there is a direct result of the campaign. If your site increases in search engine rank due to search engine optimization, you know that your efforts are producing results. Use this information to increase the investments in media and messages that are working and drop those that are not.

6. Work with Experts

Sometimes, planning and designing your campaign, testing messages, monitoring analytics, coordinating multiple advertising buys in various media, while maintaining your site's search engine submission and optimization can be overwhelming. When is it time to call in the professionals?

If you're struggling with moving your marketing campaign forward, you might want to consider getting help in the form of a marketing or advertising agency. Freelance

marketing professionals who are versed in the needs of your business and the media you intend to use can also be an economical form of assistance. You can find good professionals through referrals or look at the membership rosters of your local business, advertising, and marketing organizations. Their rates will vary from hourly to larger project fees, so be sure you get firm quotes before signing an agreement.

Don't forget to rely on your network of advertising representatives and media services to make your job easier, too. Some media companies can act as agencies, handling copy and design from print and online ads to entire websites and landing pages. Working with a professional designer can help to short-circuit some of the common design and functionality mistakes that businesses make when trying to create their own websites. Some media companies offer web design services for a fraction of the cost of boutique web design shops. It's a good idea for businesses interested in professional web design help to ask their sales reps about these services.

Today, more than ever, a wealth of resources allows businesses to build highly effective integrated campaigns and measure them like never before. Marketers who integrate their online and offline media—as well as the related measurement components that will be used to determine success—will get a clear picture of what's working and what needs to be changed in any marketing program.

In our next Marketing360 guide, we'll explore how some companies have constructed integrated campaigns and evaluated their success.

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Expert Advice from Yellowbook360

Sometimes, having so many tools available can be overwhelming—like visiting a restaurant with hundreds of choices on the menu.

The good news is that you have a guide to help you navigate the integrated marketing menu: Your Yellowbook360 media consultant. He or she can help you select from Yellowbook360's suite of tools and develop a customized solution designed to effectively promote your business across multiple platforms. Among the many solutions Yellowbook360 provides:

- Strategic advice that works within your budget
- Print directory advertising
- Online advertising on Yellowbook.com
- Search engine marketing (SEM)
- Search engine optimization (SEO)
- Online video advertising
- Direct mail campaign development and execution
- Web site development

Think of your Yellowbook360 media consultant as a partner who can help you build the *right* customized marketing solution for your business—and help you save money along the way.

Got questions? We're here to help.

Call **1-800-YB.YELLOW (1-800-929-3556)** toll-free today or visit us at **Yellowbook360.com**. Your Yellowbook consultant is eager to work one-on-one with you to create a customized multimedia marketing plan that works for your business.