

HubSpot Academy Lesson: Digital Marketing Fundamentals

Video: What is Digital Marketing?

Hey there it's Jorie with HubSpot Academy

Digital marketing? Inbound marketing?

You may be thinking, there seems to be a marketing strategy for everything these days. And while that's true, it's important to understand how these different strategies complement each other and work together to ensure you effectively reach and delight your customers. What does this mean? Let's discuss it further.

First, what is digital marketing?

Any kind of marketing that happens on a digital platform

Digital marketing encompasses all marketing efforts that use an electronic device or the internet. It's most used within marketing channels such as search engines like, Google or Bing, along with social media, email, and other websites to connect with current or prospective customers.

But notice that emphasis on channels? Keep that in mind, it will be useful later.

Now, digital marketing doesn't include only inbound marketing methods or only outbound marketing methods. Instead, it encompasses all marketing strategies if they're digital. The main difference is that outbound tactics aim to put marketing messages in front of as many people as possible in the online space – regardless of whether it's relevant or welcomed. Examples of this are banner ads at the top of websites that try to push a product or promotion onto people who aren't necessarily interested or ready to receive it.

By contrast, inbound marketing is a business methodology that attracts customers by creating valuable content and experiences tailored to them

What really sets inbound marketing apart is that marketers who employ digital inbound tactics use online content to attract their target customers to their websites by providing information that's helpful to them. For example, one of the most powerful inbound digital marketing assets a business can leverage is a blog.

This allows your website to capitalize on the key terms your ideal customers are searching for. So when it comes to differentiating Inbound and Digital Marketing, ultimately, inbound marketing is a methodology that uses digital marketing assets to attract, engage, and delight customers online.

Digital marketing, however, is a term used to describe online marketing tactics of any kind, regardless of whether they're considered inbound or outbound.

Even though HubSpot Academy doesn't teach or encourage outbound marketing methods, it's important to understand what they are. After all, focusing on digital marketing in its entirety can bring additional insights and benefits to finding and reaching customers online.

Remember the importance of marketing channels in the digital marketing definition? Let's discuss that a little more.

In an ideal world, you would know how and when to reach your customers every time. You would have a single channel for interacting with, converting, and continuing to delight them.

All of your marketing, sales, and service efforts would also be easily tracked and enhanced as you created the ideal customer experience within this single channel. But, as anyone who has ever tried to meet a quota of leads or customers can attest, if you only market in a single channel, you're going to miss out on a large portion of your target audience.

Because limiting your reach can have consequences. In fact, focusing on a single channel can create a poor customer experience and prevent you from successfully nurturing your leads.


Making a positive impression on your audience requires the delivery of relevant content when they need it and how they want it. Creating different strategies for each channel and focusing on how they work together to impact your customers is key.

Let's look at an example. Say a lead reads a blog post about an issue that your business solves and signs up for your mailing list. The marketing email they would later receive might showcase a customer testimonial from someone who overcame that same issue using your product. Later, when they were scrolling through social media, they'd see an advertisement about how your products or services continue to solve the issue they initially read about in your blog.

Rather than presenting potential customers with fragmented messages about all the great things you can do, the products you offer, or the deals that you're running, they're receiving the content that is most relevant to their needs across a variety of channels.

This approach, whether you want to call it cross-channel marketing or omni-channel marketing, exemplifies the best of digital marketing in practice today. Why?

Marketing implemented in this way provides a clear brand impression for your leads and makes their experience as seamless and direct as possible.



Additionally, because there's clear correlation between each marketing channel, it's easier to view your marketing efforts in a cumulative way, which can help you more clearly calculate and understand your marketing return on investment. Usually, pulling together such a cohesive and user-friendly experience means incorporating the following strategies into your marketing efforts:

First, there's content marketing.

Your content is what populates your website. Your blog and other pieces like eBooks and guides fall under this category, as well as your graphics, interactive tools, and videos.

When you create content that fits your target audience's needs, answers their questions, and educates them, your content will naturally attract highly qualified leads when they search online for topics related to your business.

The next digital marketing strategy is search engine optimization.

Search engine optimization or SEO is the practice of optimizing your website and its content to increase your chances of appearing in search engine results pages.

The closer to the top of those pages you are, the more organic traffic your website is likely to receive.

The closer to the top of those pages you are, the more organic traffic your website is likely to receive. This is why SEO is often a top priority for digital marketers who don't want to rely on paid ads. Because SEO and content marketing directly impact each other, an effective content marketing strategy always considers best SEO practices.

Then there's social media marketing.

Social media channels like Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn allow individuals, organizations, news distributors, and businesses to follow each other's online activity, engage in virtual conversations, and share content. A cartoon image of an open laptop computer with oversized hashtag, at, and talking bubbles hovering near it

Digital marketers tend to use a combination of social media channels to drive traffic to their websites by promoting their content.

It's also used to communicate and engage with current and prospective customers.

And you can't talk about social media marketing without native advertising sneaking in.

Native advertising often refers to boosted social media posts on platforms like Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram, as well as pay-per-click or PPC, ads like Google search ads.

Wondering the difference between native advertising versus sponsored content?

Native ads and sponsored content are both designed to look like they naturally belong on a web page. However, a native ad is paid for and created by the advertiser themselves, while an advertiser pays another brand to produce and distribute sponsored content.

Speaking of advertising, the next digital marketing strategy to consider is Ad Retargeting.

Traditional advertising is considered an outbound tactic. But because digital marketing provides marketers with data to better target customers, you can use retargeting technologies to deliver ads directly to individuals who have previously visited your website.

But don't be intrusive.

Remember, it's important to deliver content that provides value to people you hope will become customers.

Finally, no digital marketing strategy is complete without email marketing.

As the communication channel of choice for most businesspeople and used by most internet users, email is a powerful tool you can leverage to reach members of your audience directly.

Traditionally, email has developed a bad reputation for being spammy and promotional.

However, by taking an inbound approach to email, you can use email marketing to deliver helpful, personalized, and targeted content to your prospects that they'll be pleased to receive.

Using a combination of these strategies and channels can ensure you're always meeting your customers where they prefer to interact with content they can't wait to consume.

Now, that can feel like a lot to cover, so let's close out this video with some key takeaways:

- Digital marketing is any kind of marketing that happens on a digital platform.
- To continue to delight your leads and customers, you need to create relevant content on the channels they use the most.
- And to effectively implement a digital marketing strategy, you will likely need to incorporate a mixture of content marketing, SEO, social media marketing, advertising, and email marketing.

Video: A Closer Look at Digital Marketing Channels

Digital marketing strategies can be used by any business in any industry. Regardless of your company's products or services, digital marketing involves creating buyer personas to identify your target audience, determine their needs, and to develop content that's relevant and valuable to them. However, that doesn't mean all businesses should implement the exact same digital marketing strategy.

So what does digital marketing look like for B2B businesses?

If your company is business-to-business or (B2B), your digital marketing efforts are likely to focus on online lead generation, with a goal of connecting your leads with a salesperson.

For that reason, your marketing strategy should aim to attract and convert the highest quality leads for your business through your website and supporting digital channels. Beyond your website, you should also focus your marketing efforts on business-related channels, like LinkedIn, where your target audience is spending their time online.

What does digital marketing look like for B2C businesses?

If your company is business-to-consumer or (B2C), it's likely that the goal of your digital marketing efforts is to attract potential leads to your website and have them become customers without ever needing to speak to a salesperson. For that reason, you're probably less likely to focus on 'leads' in their traditional sense.

Instead, you're more likely to focus on building an accelerated buyer's journey from the moment someone visits your website, to the moment they make a purchase. This will often mean that the key features of your product or services are highlighted closer to the beginning of the customer's buyer journey, than they would be for a B2B business.

For B2C companies, channels like Instagram and Pinterest can often be more valuable than business-focused platforms like LinkedIn.

Now, the kind of content you create depends on your audience's needs at different stages in the buyer's journey. You should start by creating buyer personas to identify what your audience's goals and challenges are in relation to your business. Your online content should then aim to help your audience meet those goals and overcome their challenges.

Next, you'll need to think about when your audience is most likely to be ready to consume your content, depending on the stage of the buyer's journey they're in.

With content mapping, the goal is to target content according to: one, the characteristics of the person who will be consuming it (that's where buyer personas come in) and two, how close that person is to making a purchase (i.e., their lifecycle stage).

In terms of the format of your content, there are a lot of different things to try. Here are some options HubSpot recommends using at each stage of the buyer's journey.

During the awareness stage, it's effective to use:

Infographics. These are very shareable, meaning they increase your chances of being found through social media when others share your content.

You can also use **short videos**. Again, these are also very shareable and can help your brand be seen by new audiences by hosting them on platforms like YouTube.

During the consideration stage, think about using:

eBooks. eBooks are beneficial for lead generation since they're usually more comprehensive than a blog post or infographic. Typically, this means that someone is more likely to exchange their contact information to receive it.

You could also try **free samples.** A free sample is another example of content or an offer that overlaps between buyer's journey stages.

Consider this: An individual wants to paint the inside of their home, but they don't know what color.

As they consider which color (the solution), they pick up paint chip cards from their hardware store. These cards are created by a provider based on their individual solution. When the individual falls in love with a color, they already know who the provider is that makes it.

And no buyer's journey would be complete without **webinars.** As they're a more detailed, interactive form of video content, webinars are an effective content format, as they're more comprehensive than a blog post or short video. A webinar can be prerecorded or streamed live, and this opens tons of possibilities to disseminate information to an audience who wants more visual and auditory content.

Finally, here's some format recommendations for your decision stage.

First up, **case studies.** Having detailed case studies on your website can be an effective form of content for those who are ready to make a purchasing decision. Why? Case studies actively compare solutions and providers and showcase how your product or service in particular can help your visitors solve a problem they're experiencing. A good case study will appeal to the emotions and logic of the persona by providing detailed information and quantitative data on the final solution.

During the decision stage, think about also using **testimonials.** Particularly if case studies aren't a good fit for your business, having short testimonials throughout your website can be a great way to leverage social proof. This might come from a customer's photo on social media showcasing your product and using a branded hashtag in their caption.

Now, this can feel like a lot of different options. So, let's look at some examples of companies using different types of branded content in their digital marketing strategies to reach and delight their audiences.

GoPro is famous for its unique point-of-view style video footage, all filmed from the company's fisheye lens. What you might not know is that so much of the video content you see on GoPro's YouTube channel wasn't made by GoPro – rather, it's created by their loyal customers.

By populating their YouTube channel with user-made video content, GoPro has encouraged their fanbase to capture their footage and adventures, and then post it online (crediting the GoPro product for their footage and experience). This ongoing digital marketing campaign has championed the use of video to spread the word about GoPro's product line, along with creating a community of loyal customers and fans.



Then there's Delta Airlines. Delta Airlines is a prolific user of social media, specifically on Twitter.

The brand uses the platform to engage potential passengers in a variety of ways that are both timely and emotionally stimulating.

For example, in honor of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, the company shared personal stories from Delta employees with their audience on Twitter.

This type of Twitter strategy promotes loyalty, positive brand awareness, and gives prospective and current customers an idea of what Delta cares about and stands for.

Let's look at another example. Mastercard bases its brand on the stories and adventures that cardholders experience.

But what good is a travel-based brand without a travel-based digital marketing campaign to go with it?

Priceless Cities, Mastercard's travel blog, is a resource that showcases how existing customers use their different credit cards to help them pay for their trips. This creates a direct connection between what Mastercard brands itself as and what customers actually perceive. It also allows the company to better align with the things their customers invest in, as well as the places their customers travel to.

Finally, let's check in with Red Bull.

Red Bull has become well-known for the sponsorship of extreme sports, not just the energy drink they sell. Instead of creating digital content related to the energy drink, Red Bull captures its audience with articles and videos about the latest news in the extreme sports community.

In this way, Red Bull has proved that what you sell isn't always the main or ideal focus for your content strategy.

In this way, Red Bull has proved that what you sell isn't always the main or ideal focus for your content strategy. Rather, it can be significantly more valuable to tailor a campaign to the lifestyle your customers live or want to be associated with. This shows the company not only understands their target buyer personas but caters their content completely to them.

Now, keep in mind, these are just examples to get the inspirational juices flowing! Depending on your organization mission and brand, services, and products, what digital marketing will look like for you in practice could be completely different. You can be as creative as your audience demands.

Video: Implementing Your Digital Marketing Strategy

In practice there are four key steps to implementing a digital marketing strategy at your organization. They include:

- build your buyer personas
- identify your goals and the digital marketing tools you'll need
- evaluate your existing digital channels and assets, and finally,
- plan your campaigns.

Let's dive into each of these in a little more detail. First, you need to build your buyer personas.

For any marketing strategy – digital or not – you need to know who you're marketing to. The best digital marketing strategies are built upon detailed buyer personas, and your first step is to create them.

What are buyer personas?

Semi-fictional representations of your ideal customer(s) that can be created by researching, surveying, and interviewing your business's target audience

Keep in mind, this information should be based upon real data whenever possible.

That's because making assumptions about your audience can cause your marketing strategy to move in the wrong direction.

To get a full idea of your buyer persona, your research pool should include a mixture of customers, prospects, and people outside your contacts database who align with your target audience.

Need some help creating and tracking your buyer personas? Look no further! Here's a couple recommended tools.

If you're just starting out, try the Map My Persona tool. Use this interactive webpage to create professional, customizable buyer personas in minutes with the help of HubSpot's intuitive free generator.

If you're already experienced with the concept of personas, use the HubSpot Persona Template, to help you easily organize your research as you create your very own buyer personas.

Finally, keep track of all the great research and brainstorming you've done directly in your HubSpot account using the HubSpot Buyer Persona Tool.

After building your personas, your next step is to identify your goals and the digital marketing tools you'll need.

Your marketing goals should always have a direct connection to the fundamental goals of your business.

For example, if your business's goal is to increase online revenue by 20%. To help contribute to that success, your marketing goal might be to generate 50% more leads through your website than the previous year.

Looking for tools to set effective marketing goals? Look no further! First up, is the HubSpot Marketing Plan Template. Use this high-level marketing plan template to outline your annual marketing strategy, identify top priorities, and more.

Next, try the Inbound Goal Calculator. This editable pdf is used by HubSpot consultants helping companies set up their inbound strategies. Use it as a template to add tangible numbers to the goals you set.

Both resources are in the resources tab of this video.

So, you're well on the way to determining your marketing goals, now it's time to get critical with your actual marketing tools. How?

When determining if a marketing tool is right for you, use the following factors to guide your evaluation process and help you make the best purchase decision:

User Interface: Consider how simple or overwhelming the platform's user interface is designed. Many, if not all platforms will claim they have an intuitive and easy-to-use platform – but this isn't always the case.

To determine whether the platform's user interface will be easy for you to learn, ask for a demo.

Features & Native Integrations: Each marketing automation platform will offer different features, so make sure you're choosing a platform that has the capabilities you need. It's also important to consider the existing technology you already have.

Customer Support: When starting on a new and unfamiliar system, you'll want to receive the best help possible. It's important to recognize that technology isn't perfect and that things may break. Having that extra help to resolve your unique issue can be critical.

Learning Resources: When purchasing a new marketing automation tool, having online resources available can help you get the most out of your new system. Some platforms have guides, how-to videos, or even webinars that can help you learn how to use the tool.

Userbase & Reviews: Although choosing the right platform for your e-commerce business depends on your company's personal needs and goals, you'll want to understand how other users of the tool are making the most of it. Look for case studies or video testimonials that showcase existing customers speaking about their experiences.

After identifying your goals and toolset, your next step is to evaluate your existing digital channels and assets.

When reviewing your existing digital marketing channels and assets to determine what to incorporate in your strategy, it's helpful to first consider the big picture – this will prevent you from feeling overwhelmed or confused.

Gather what you have and categorize each vehicle or asset in a spreadsheet. That way you have a clear understanding of your existing owned, earned, and paid media.

To do this effectively, use the owned, earned, and paid media framework to categorize the digital "vehicles", assets, or channels you're already using and decide what's a good fit for your strategy.

Those terms may sound familiar, but let's review each to make sure we're all on the same page.

So, what is owned media?

Owned media refers to the digital assets your brand or company owns – whether that's your website, social media profiles, blog content, or imagery. These are the owned channels that your business has complete control over.

Owned media can also include some off-site content you created that isn't hosted on your website (e.g., a blog you published on Medium).

Then, what is earned media?

Earned media refers to the exposure you earn through word-of-mouth marketing. Whether that's content you've distributed on other websites (e.g., guest blog posts), PR work you've been curating, or the customer experience you've delivered. Earned media is the recognition you receive because of these efforts.

You can earn media by obtaining mentions in the news and positive reviews, as well as by people sharing your content through their networks or social media channels.

Finally, what is paid media?

Paid media refers to any vehicle or channel you finance to catch the attention of your buyer personas.

This includes things like Google Ads, paid social media posts, native advertising (e.g., sponsored posts on other websites), or any other medium through which you pay in exchange for increased visibility.

Keep in mind, content can be repurposed into different types of media.

Let's say you have an owned piece of content on a landing page that's been created to help you generate leads. You know you want to incorporate different parts of the framework rather than just working with owned, earned, or paid media alone.

To amplify the number of leads the content generates, you try to ensure it's shareable, so your audience can distribute it through their social media profiles. In return, this increases traffic to your landing page. This is the earned media component. To support your content's success, you might post about the content on your Facebook page and pay to have it seen by more people in your target audience.

This is how the three parts of the framework can work together – although, it's not necessary for success.

For instance, if your owned and earned media are already both successful, you might not need to invest in paid. So, evaluate the best solution to help you meet your goal and then incorporate the channels that work best for your business into your digital marketing strategy. Now that you know what's already being used, you can start to think about what to keep and what to cut. Which is where campaign planning comes in.

Last, but certainly, not least, the last step in creating a digital marketing strategy is to plan your campaigns.

At the heart of digital marketing is content.

Content helps convert your website visitors into leads and customers while improving your brand's online presence. And when this content is search engine optimized (SEO), it can boost your search and organic traffic.

To start, decide what content will help you reach your goals. A great place to start is by performing a content audit. How? Make a list of your existing owned content and rank each item according to what has previously performed best in relation to your current goals.

For example, if your goal is lead generation, rank your content according to which pieces generated the most leads over the last year (such as a blog post, eBook, or site page). The idea here is to figure out what's currently working and what's not, so you can set yourself up for success when planning future content.

Next, audit your earned media campaigns.

Evaluating your past earned media against your current goals can help you get an idea of where to focus your time. Look at where your traffic and leads are coming from (if that's your goal) and rank each earned media source from most effective to least effective.

You can obtain this information using resources like HubSpot's Analytics Tool.

You may find a particular article you contributed to the industry press drove a lot of qualified traffic to your website, which boosted conversions. Or you may discover LinkedIn is where you see most people sharing your content, which increased traffic.

The idea is to build a picture of what types of earned media will help you reach your goals (and which won't, based on historical data).

The idea is to build a picture of what types of earned media will help you reach your goals (and what won't) based on historical data. However, if there's something new you want to experiment with, don't negate it just because it's never been done before.

Finally, audit your paid media.

This process involves much of the same process: You need to evaluate your existing paid media across each platform (e.g., Google Ads, Facebook, Twitter, etc.) to determine what's most likely to help you meet your current goals.

Why audit your paid media campaigns?

If you've spent a lot of money on Google Ads and haven't seen the results you'd hoped for, maybe it's time to refine your approach, or stop it altogether and focus on another platform that seems to be yielding better results. By the end of the process, you should have a clear idea of which paid media platforms you want to continue using, and which (if any) you'd like to remove from your strategy.

Once each audit is complete, identify any gaps in the content you have, always keeping your buyer persona top of mind.

For example, say you run a math tutoring company.

You know through research that a major challenge for your personas is finding effective ways to study – and you don't currently have content that speaks to that concern – create some. By looking at your content audit, you might discover that eBooks hosted on a certain type of landing page convert well (better than webinars, for example).

In the case of this math tutoring company, you might make the decision to add an eBook about "how to make studying more effective" to your content creation plans.

From there, you can start to develop your content creation plan.

Based on your findings and the gaps you've identified, make a content creation plan outlining the content that's necessary to help you hit your goals.

A content creation plan should include a title, the content format, the goal, the planned promotional channels, notes on why you're creating the content, as well as priority level of the content.

Your content creation plan can be a simple spreadsheet.

It should also include budget information if you're planning to outsource the content creation, or a time estimate if you're producing it yourself.

Now, those four steps certainly pack a punch. With that in mind, let's close out the video with some key takeaways.

- When implementing a digital marketing strategy, you need to: build your buyer personas, identify your goals and the digital marketing tools you'll need, evaluate your existing digital channels and assets, plan your campaigns.
- Your content will likely be a mixture of owned, earned, and paid media. You'll want to make sure to audit for each before kicking off a new digital marketing campaign.

As always, check out the additional resources of this lesson for templates and resources on each of these steps.