



INTEGRATE TO ACCUMULATE

Ensure that your online and offline marketing activity works in unison

Achieving a balance

With websites, social media, Google ads and videos having significant advertising power, it's easy to think that more traditional methods are no longer required. **This is not the case.**

From brochures to business cards and posters to pens, offline marketing is still as essential as it ever was. However, the key is to make these materials work together with your online presence, and it's actually very easy to achieve.

Graphically identifiable

q: What's the main function of your branding?

a: To be instantly recognisable to your audience.

The logo that you use on your letterhead, for instance, should be the same as the one used on your website.

Universal employment of this and any other distinguishing design elements, such as fonts and the colour palette, is essential. The reason for this is because if your branding is achieving its primary function, people will expect to see it when engaging with you, be it by picking up one of your flyers or searching for you on Facebook.

Imagine if a CEO, having received a branded letter from you, is taking a couple of minutes out of their busy day to find your business online. The nightmare scenario is that your stationery doesn't reflect a recent rebrand, so even though they've found your website, they think they've arrived at the wrong place. As a result they close the browser and never give it another shot, and the worst thing is that you'll never even know it happened.

In addition, a visual consistency across all platforms – online and offline – shows that you have a strong brand identity, which is exactly the reason for having a brand in the first place.

So whether it's a piece of newspaper advertorial, an online banner ad, a pull-up stand or your Twitter profile picture, make sure that all of your promotional avenues begin with the same signpost.

Are you talking to me?

A company's voice is as important as its look. It could be no-nonsense and technical or zany and off the wall, but whatever the style it should remain consistent and strong. This doesn't mean that there isn't room for development or creative opportunity, just as long as it's all in line with what you want to say and how you wish for it to be received by the audience.

As with all visual elements, your unique word bank must always be omnipresent. So if you have a slogan or strapline, make sure that it's on your letterheads, business cards, social media channels, website, any form of advertising you use and yes, even your promotional pens, balloons and bags of sweets if possible. The reason for having a strapline is to communicate your brand philosophy or to grab the audience's attention, and often both; there's no reason whatsoever why it should be on one type of material but not another, unless of course space is severely limited.

If you're lucky enough to have achieved wide recognition without the need for visual words, congratulations! However, you should make every effort to include any distinguishable language and concise messages wherever you can to aid the potential customer when they're gathering information. For example, if they've read an article about your company in a magazine, or seen a message on a billboard, the same information should be available on your website. At the same time, your website should include additional details that complement and extend the visitor's knowledge of your company and its product or service.

"Visit us online"

Your website is there to receive visitors, but it isn't going to achieve that simply through crossing your fingers and wishing for busy traffic. It's imperative that your website address is communicated through all other marketing materials: brochures, flyers, business cards, letterheads, printed articles, posters, banner stands, uniforms, vehicle wraps, Christmas cards, videos, USB sticks, pens, notepads, window frosting and the façade of your building can all boast visits to your website.

Always keep track of what promotional activity you have done and the date that it landed or launched, and check metrics for activity spikes.

Snap happy

So... what's going on at the moment? Chances are that you have a new catalogue that's just arrived, or a member of your team is raising money for charity. Perhaps you have a street team meeting the public, or the office is undergoing some exciting redevelopments. Maybe you're all just enjoying bacon butties on a Friday morning, complete with a round of steaming hot cuppas. Whatever you're up to offline, sharing it with your online audience via social media and blog posts will result in far greater engagement than activity that's solely news and views. The fact that content can be shared immediately makes it all the better, as you can not only share activity as and when it happens but even shape the content so that it reflects, say, a national event or trending hashtag.

Keep your Facebook page and Twitter as active and visual as possible, and if you have a Flickr account and an Instagram gallery make sure to post it on there too. It's completely up to you whether you use the exact same content on every channel or make each one slightly different, the main point is that anyone checking you out online will see what you're up to offline in real-time.

Also, if you have an article published in a magazine or an interview in the paper, take a snap of that too and post it on your digital channels, including a link to the online version if applicable.

It's up to you what style to use for all of the above; it could be descriptive ('Here's Project Manager James wearing one of our new polo shirts'), informative ('Our street team will give you a free chocolate bar in exchange for a mention on Facebook or Twitter'), or interactive ('The first ten people to correctly guess the location of our new billboard win a prize'). However you choose to say it, you'll be engaging a wide audience, with the potential for a far wider viral reach than a simple text-based post.

Key information

Keywords aren't just for the Internet. Let's say your company provides executive recruiting services. If this is the case, the term "executive recruiting" should all be included in your online and offline materials, as well as any other relevant terms.

The reason for this is twofold:

If a customer reads about your product in the paper and later searches for your company off the top of their head, using the same website keywords as those in print will increase the likelihood of your website being found quickly.

Keywords communicate the essence of your product or service and provide a bite-sized description of what you offer, so they should always be used through every marketing channel in one way or another.

Slow and steady wins the race

It's easy to think that you've done all you can by phoning your dream client to see if they received the brochure you sent them in the mail, but there's actually a variety of follow-up activity that you could stagger over time.

The first thing to do is create a strategy. Fail to do this and there's a high chance that whilst you're emailing a prospective client, one of your colleagues is tweeting them, whilst another is putting together a nice little package for the postman to deliver to their desk. By communicating with your team (or, if you work alone, planning everything in advance), you'll never annoy a potential client by bombarding them over a short period.

However, you also don't want to get the prospective client's attention with a well-written letter, only to then forget all about them because they fail to get in contact with you immediately. Who knows, maybe they're interested but want you to prove that you mean business? Here's a suggestion of what you could do to get their attention in a professional and proactive manner:

Week 1: A formal but friendly and informative letter, including a freebie if possible.

Week 2: A personalised email that references the previous week's letter, also linking through to your website and social media channels.

Week 3: Pick up that phone! If you can get past the gatekeeper, try to arrange a meeting to discuss how you can work together.

Week 4: If all else has failed, mix it up! You could use LinkedIn, Twitter, or even a fully customised form of promotion, such as a short video specially filmed for that particular individual, embedded into an email.

It's OK for you to try different things to get someone's attention. Providing it's clear that it's not part of some mass communication, there's a good chance that you'll soon add that desired meeting to your diary.

Be yourself

So those are our tips on how to merge your offline and online marketing tactics to get the optimum result. But before we go, we need to make one thing absolutely clear: make sure to get your brand's personality across.

Obviously you need to communicate what your company is, what it offers and how that will benefit the potential client, but this can fall short if there's no human touch to go with it all. Again, how you do this is up to you; some people may choose to offer friendly technical advice, whilst others may decide to adopt a fun and off-kilter approach in a bid to turn eyes toward their business. Whatever you decide on, just make sure that it's faithful to your brand guidelines.

With Thanks

This short guide should help with your marketing efforts, but please don't hesitate to get in touch if you require anything else.

Best wishes,

