

RACE Growth System Planning Guide

Rapidly create a 90-day marketing plan for your business

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How to use this RACE Growth System guide

Aims of this guide

This guide will teach you how to rapidly create a simple marketing plan using the 90-day RACE Growth System. It follows a three-step process of defining your Opportunity, Strategy and Action to make smarter use of digital communications.

How to use this guide

We start by introducing the RACE Growth System. Then, for each of the three-steps, you will enter your 1. Opportunity, 2. Strategy and 3. Action prompted by the examples for a typical small business.

To make it as easy as possible for you to create your 90-day plan, we've made a free editable template to compliment this guide. To access it, along with further assistance on filling it in, [join Smart Insights Free Membership](#).

Turning your plan into action with Smart Insights resources

To help you and your team learn and action the best practices to grow your business, we recommend the most popular Learning Path modules and templates to implement the 90-day plan.

Smart Insights members gain access to over 100 bitesize modules and related templates to plan, manage and optimize their marketing. Each takes around 15 minutes to complete.

[View all our Learning Path modules and planning templates](#)





Improve your business...

It's difficult to find the time to plan properly for marketing. It's often easier to focus on addressing the here and now rather than taking the time to pause and think forward. But running full speed from day-to-day doesn't help you really consider what's most important - which marketing activities would make the biggest difference. What would make your company really grow?

Consider the pitfalls of what you're missing if you don't have a plan addressing the opportunities of modern digital marketing:

- Your competition, effective in acquiring customers using digital marketing gain an advantage, leaving you behind
- You'll have a weak customer focus, which will make you hard to stand out to your potential customers
- Your goals will be poorly defined and targets missed
- You're likely to be tactical, and lacking a strategic approach to integrated digital communications
- You'll have poor budget and resource allocation - wasting money, time and resources

Essentially, your business isn't strategic, and isn't optimized - and your results will suffer.



... And improve yourself

It's similar from a personal improvement point of view. If you, or your team, don't have personal development goals and training related to digital communications allocated to achieve them, you will miss out since you haven't:

- Audited your skills gap
- Identified priorities for improving skills
- Reviewed progress in your skills development regularly

While you and your team's marketing skills are going stale, your competitors are keeping up with the latest digital trends, and - you guessed it - you and your business will end up struggling to keep up.

“But taking the time to plan, upskill myself and my team, keep up to date as well as running a business is hard!”, we hear you say.

And you're right. It is. But thanks to the Smart Insights RACE Growth System, it doesn't have to be.

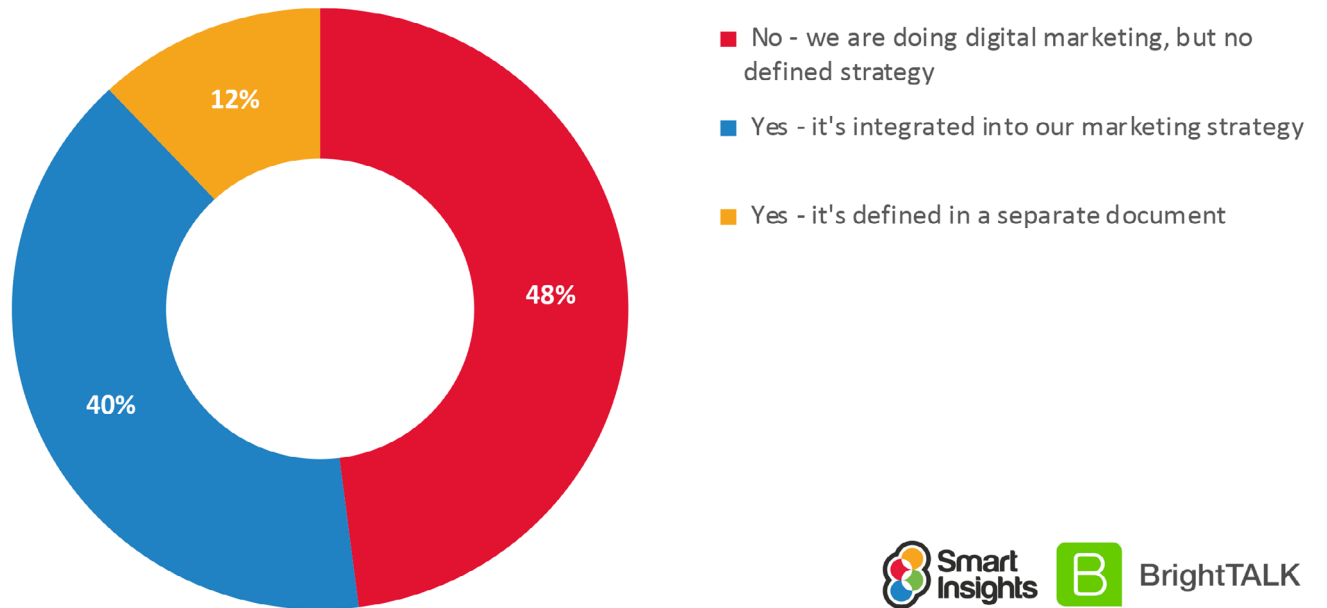
Smart Insights' RACE Growth System is designed to help businesses plan, manage and optimize their marketing communications and to help individuals and teams develop the skills needed in their current roles and for their future career.

We created RACE in 2010 to cut through the complexity of modern digital communications. Our research showed that most businesses were running digital marketing activities, but without a structured approach using a dedicated integrated communications plan.

This remains the case; our recent research shows that around half of businesses have no clear plan.

Since digital marketing is vital to the modern marketing and sales process, our focus is integrating data-driven online marketing activities aligned with marketing and business strategy.

Does your organisation have a clearly-defined digital marketing strategy?



The RACE Growth System works on a 90-day planning cycle. In each cycle, you'll identify your **OPPORTUNITIES** - what you want to work on, your **STRATEGY** to achieve that, and finally the **ACTIONS** you're going to take to achieve them.

The RACE Growth System has two parts, and you'll use both of them to create and implement your plan.

1. Marketing Activities

The RACE Framework defines the essential marketing activities you need to survive and thrive in today's omnichannel marketing world.

The five parts of RACE are:

Plan > **Reach** > **Act** > **Convert** > **Engage**

Our Learning Paths and planning templates break these down into five parts to give 25 key marketing activities that any business needs to manage, and for which skills need to be developed.

The RACE Framework forms the bedrock of the RACE Growth System, and provides full coverage of the customer lifecycle that you'll use when creating your plan.



The OSA Process

OSA stands for Opportunity, Strategy, Action. Let's take a simple example:

Opportunity: I want to convert 10% more warm leads

Strategy: I'm going to use retargeting tactics to re-engage prospects with our brand

Action: I will send retargeting emails with offers to encourage click-through to site

We use the OSA process to put RACE into action. It helps you to quickly create and implement an agile plan to improve both your business and personal skills.

OSA can be used for planning all modern marketing activities:

- An overall marketing plan
- A more specific digital channel plan
- An action plan to improve results from your website or a channel like organic or paid search, social media or email marketing.
- A skills development plan

To make the growth system actionable, you create a 90-day action plan. This will help you quickly decide what you need to prioritize to achieve your business and personal needs by using the Learning Paths, tools and templates available with Smart Insights.

Let's get started with the first part of your plan.



What opportunities are available to grow your business? We must first understand who we're selling to, how our competition is positioned, and how we're currently competing. For the following sections, we use a small B2B accountancy firm as an example to illustrate how you'd complete this table. To get access to our editable template which you can fill in alongside this guide, become a [Smart Insights Free Member now](#).

Who are you targeting?

Customer analysis - who are they, what are their needs?

Customer analysis	Example	Your customer
Who are they?	Local small business owners, company size 10-250 employees	
What are their needs?	Need accounting services	
Where are they?	Local business news and forums, LinkedIn and Facebook	
What would attract them to your company?	Educational blogs, reports, offers and assistance	
What score out of 10 would you give your business when it comes to attracting your customers online?	5	
Why did you give that score?	I know my local online visibility needs a lot of work - I'm spending too much on Google Ads to compete. Our website content isn't effective.	

To find out more about how to identify who your quality customers are, our [Persona guide and template](#) is a great place to start.

Who are you competing with?

Now we'll compare you to your leading competitor. For this, think of one business similar to yours that you'd like to be more competitive with.

Customer analysis	Example competitor	Your customer
Who are they?	ABC Accountants	
How would you rate them (1-10) in attracting your customers?	7	
Why did you give them that score?	They have a much better local search engine ranking, plan social media campaigns better and have better website content to explain what they offer	
What would help you to compete better/what do you think they do better than you, currently?	I need to improve my local SEO, develop more effective content and plan social media campaigns to get more leads	

How can you beat the competition?

Now that we know what we want to improve, we'll use the RACE Framework to focus on the marketing activities you can use.

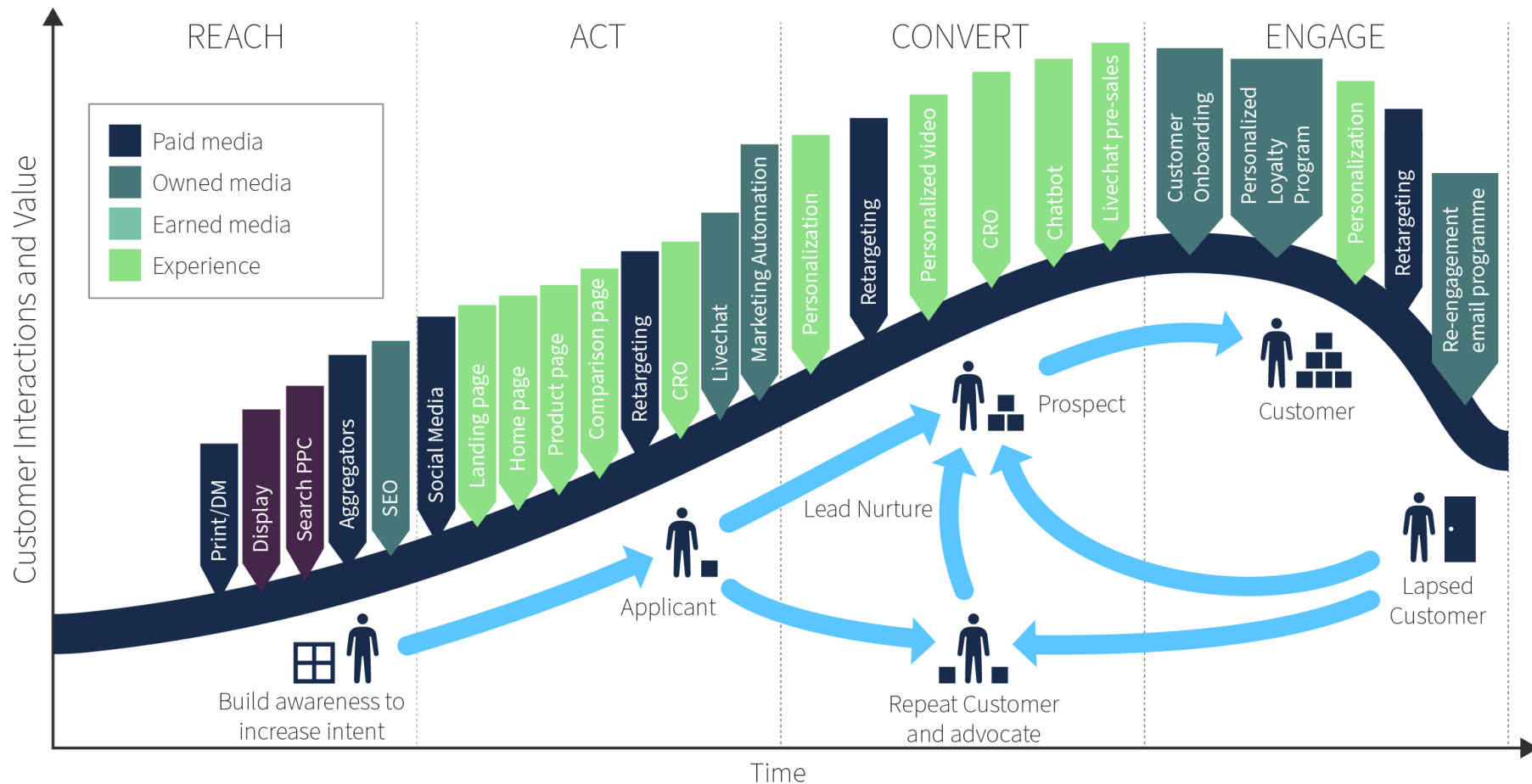
Choose one opportunity in each area of RACE that you want to benchmark against your competition. Remember this is aspirational - if you had everything you needed, what would make the biggest difference to your business performance vs. your competition?

Why do we tell you to choose only one? Because 90 days isn't very long - and choosing one opportunity in each area of RACE means you will make incremental improvements to the full customer lifecycle with each plan. This has been proven to make a bigger difference to your business results.

EXAMPLE OPPORTUNITIES

Not all of your opportunities will be completed in 90 days! Some may take a lot longer - that's normal, so don't exclude anything that will take longer than 90 days if it's really important. We'll show you how to handle this later in the process.

Choosing strategies and action to add to your plan is hard, and so to help, here's our Customer lifecycle visual, which shows the areas you should consider for each area of RACE. We've also included a worked example throughout this document to help you decide.





Review your RACE lifecycle activities

Referring to the customer lifecycle on the previous page, we will now show you how to review your customer lifecycle within RACE to identify opportunities for improvement and set SMART objectives for your marketing plan.

Opportunity Example

“Competitors are much better at local SEO, so we’re over reliant on Google Ads.”

“We don’t have any dedicated landing pages or a content offer for lead capture.”

“We should improve digital support of sales process.”

“We don’t do any form of email engagement with current customers.”

HOW SHOULD YOU MEASURE SUCCESS?

Put simply, objectives are **what** you want to achieve and **how** you define success.

The graphic to the right illustrates the hierarchy we teach as it applies to measuring different levels of success. How granular you get depends on the application.

Each level of the hierarchy expands on - and relies on - the levels above and below.



S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific • Strategic
M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measurable • Motivating
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievable • Actionable
R	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant • Realistic
T	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time-bound • Trackable

Our module on [setting digital marketing goals and objectives](#) explains that you need broad goals with SMART objectives and key KPIs to include on our Google Analytics-powered [RACE dashboard template](#).

The SMART objectives mnemonic acronym is also shown to the left. Each letter of SMART is a specific watchword, and these are crucial for keeping your objectives guided and grounded.

Stress testing your objectives against using SMART is the best way of ensuring you're setting objectives that will make a difference and allow you to review and refresh as you work on them.

Use the RACE lifecycle visual from earlier in this template to decide on and add your opportunities and SMART objectives. Remember - you can [get an editable PowerPoint template to complete](#) for free with Smart Insights Free Membership.

	Opportunity	Your opportunity
Reach	<p><i>“Competitors are much better at local SEO, so we’re over reliant on Google Ads”</i></p> <p>SMART Objective: <i>“Increase organic unique visitors by 25% in 6 months”</i></p>	<p>SMART Objective:</p>
Act	<p><i>“No dedicated landing pages or content offer for lead capture”</i></p> <p>SMART Objective: <i>“Increase leads through website by 10% in 3 months”</i></p>	<p>SMART Objective:</p>
Convert	<p><i>“Improve digital support of sales process”</i></p> <p>SMART Objective: <i>“Automate a follow-up email sequence to all leads with content asset within 10 minutes of sign up within 6 months”</i></p>	<p>SMART Objective:</p>
Engage	<p><i>“Don’t do any form of email engagement with current customers”</i></p> <p>SMART Objective: <i>“Send a monthly newsletter to all current clients within 6 months”</i></p>	<p>SMART Objective:</p>

Your strategy is your plan of action to achieve your objectives.

For each of the opportunities you’ve just identified, add in the strategy you’re going to use. The RACE customer lifecycle activities graphic can help you identify strategies for each area.

	Strategy - example	Your strategy
Reach	<i>“Improve Google My Business and create local blog content”</i>	
Act	<i>“Create landing page and local content asset focused on capturing more leads”</i>	
Convert	<i>“Define and automate a 3-email nurture sequence to leads with content assets included to help improve conversion”</i>	
Engage	<i>“Define a way to publish and automate a monthly newsletter to existing clients which links to blog”</i>	

The final section of OSA is Action - these are the tactics you're going to use to achieve your objectives - the "how". What tools are you going to use, how, when and where? Here we break this down into two areas - 90 day 'can do' actions are those that you have the skills and knowledge to complete within this 90 day cycle. Longer term 'learning' actions are areas you need to research before you can use them to create more advanced 'can do' actions in a later 90 day planning cycle.

	Action - example
Reach	<p>90 day 'can do' actions</p> <p><i>"Increase reviews & product content on Google My Business. Create an editorial calendar, research keywords & write one blog each week focusing on these (linked to from newsletter). Share to LinkedIn and Facebook"</i></p> <p>Longer term 'learning' actions</p> <p><i>"Learn more about in-depth SEO by taking the SEO Learning Path & Content Marketing Learning Path with my Smart Insights membership"</i></p>
Act	<p>90 day 'can do' actions</p> <p><i>"Research, wireframe a landing page, create content, design, build & launch it. Target ads at it"</i></p> <p>Longer term 'learning' actions</p> <p><i>"Learn more about optimizing my website with the Digital Experience Learning Path"</i></p>
Convert	<p>90 day 'can do' actions</p> <p><i>"Create, design & produce automated email including case study. Research & purchase platform for automated email."</i></p> <p>Longer term 'learning' actions</p> <p><i>"Research more about best practises for nurture emails in the Campaign Planning Learning Path"</i></p>
Engage	<p>90 day 'can do' actions</p> <p><i>"Build a customer email list from our data. Research & purchase platform for automated email"</i></p> <p>Longer term 'learning' actions</p> <p><i>"Research best practises for effective enewsletters in Email Marketing & Automation Learning Path"</i></p>

As illustrated on the previous page, you can use the ‘your action’ space to identify what actions you will take to meet your strategy goals across the RACE Funnel.

	Your action
Reach	90 day ‘can do’ actions Longer term ‘learning’ actions
Act	90 day ‘can do’ actions Longer term ‘learning’ actions
Convert	90 day ‘can do’ actions Longer term ‘learning’ actions
Engage	90 day ‘can do’ actions Longer term ‘learning’ actions



NEXT STEPS

Implement your RACE Growth System 90-day marketing plan

Unlock our FREE RACE Growth System editable template as a Free Member

Now you have your 90-day plan, it's time to put it into action and start to grow your business. That's where we come in. Smart Insights offers an extensive range of guides, templates, and e-learning modules across all channels of digital marketing.

So, whether you need to generate more leads, improve your conversion to sale or engage and retain your customers, we've got you covered. We offer in-depth actionable advice within our memberships to help you implement your plan and out-perform your competition.

Sign up today and get access to our complimentary [RACE Growth System template](#).

What are you looking to achieve?



Business Growth

Grow your business by learning and applying up-to-date best practices and the latest marketing techniques.

GROW MY BUSINESS



Team Development

Track learning and give your team the freedom to learn anytime and anywhere, by combining training with application.

UPSKILL MY TEAM

The Smart Insights Difference - how we help members plan, manage and optimize

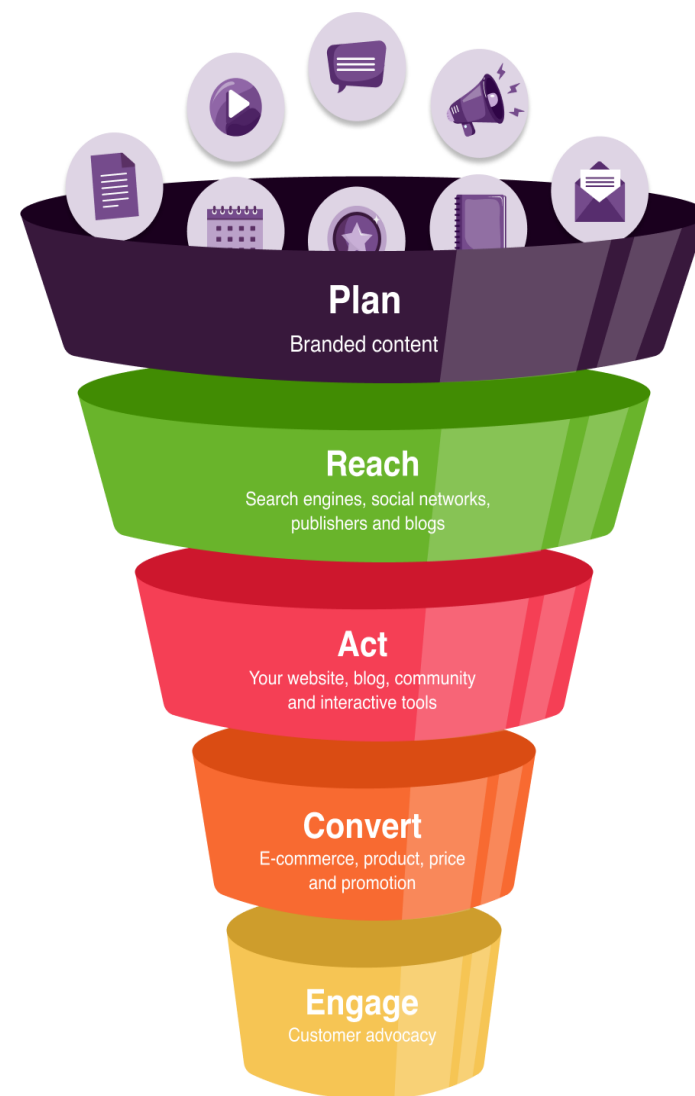
At Smart Insights, we reach over 500,000 unique visitors each month. We have over 165,000 members, who subscribe to improve their marketing processes and ROI by applying the Smart Insights Growth System.

ENQUIRE NOW

There are many blogs and training courses that will advise you on digital marketing tactics like search, social media and email marketing in isolation. Rightly so, since if you're creative and follow the best practices to optimize them, these can give you great results.

Naturally, Smart Insights advise on these key channels. However, it's our belief that, to be effective in modern marketing, you need to develop integrated strategies and data-driven plans based on the marketing fundamentals such as segmentation, targeting and brand positioning.

You need to develop the skills and put in place the processes to Plan, Manage AND Optimize your activities.



Any questions? Contact us on info@smartinsights.com