



# Online Advertising Playbook

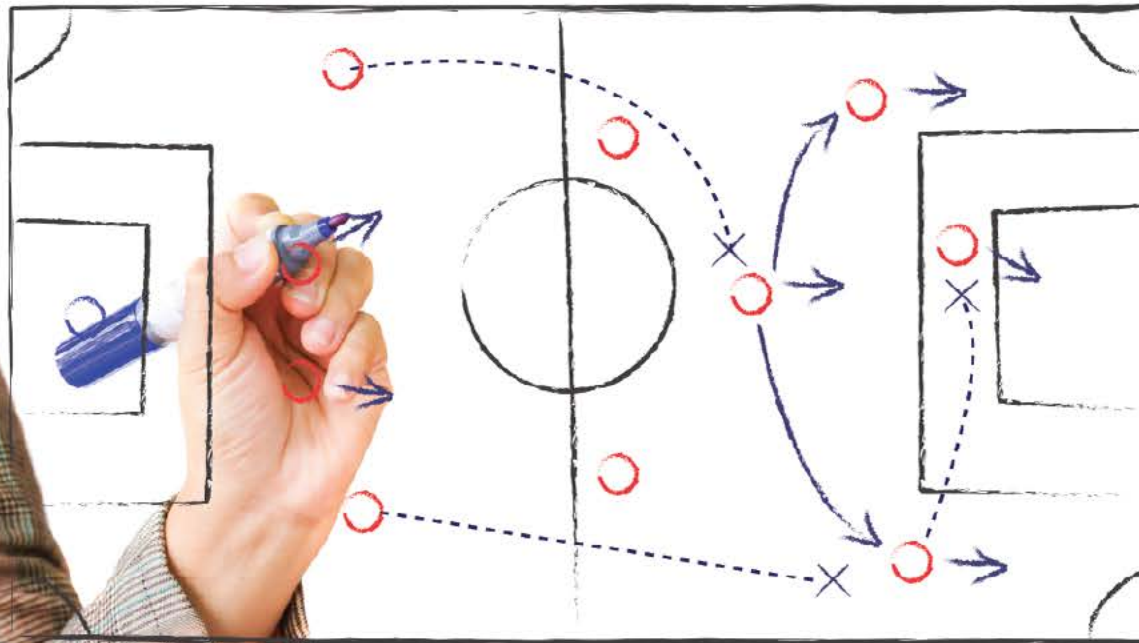
A PRACTICAL,  
HANDS-ON GUIDE  
FOR SMALL-BUSINESS  
OWNERS

# The Internet

## HAS PROFOUNDLY CHANGED THE WAY AMERICANS SHOP...

... a fact that has opened up new possibilities for advertising your business. As consumers continue to turn to online sources in the process of making purchasing decisions, businesses without a web

presence are becoming invisible to many of their target customers. Online advertising is an important part of today's marketing mix. In fact, 66% of today's consumers research products and brands on the Internet before ever setting foot in a store.<sup>1</sup>



But where do you begin, and what are the best avenues for expanding your online advertising efforts? This eBook will give you a simple and straightforward introduction to online marketing with the information you need to understand your options, make smart advertising investments, measure success and consider the next steps to develop multichannel campaigns that build on that success.

# Top **9** Online Advertising Terms

- 1 IMPRESSION:** A single appearance of an advertisement on a web page. Advertisers often buy online ads by number of impressions, or the number of times the ad is displayed.
- 2 CLICK-THROUGH/CLICK-THROUGH RATE:** When someone clicks on a link that takes the visitor to a web page, that's a click-through. The click-through rate is the number of clicks on an ad divided by the number of times the ad is displayed (impressions), expressed as a percentage.
- 3 VIEW-THROUGH/VIEW-THROUGH RATE:** View-through is the measurement of consumers' post-impression or post-exposure behavior. View-through activities include actions like website visits, purchases and other types of online conversion – even when those activities happen days or weeks after exposure to the initial ad. This view-through activity is measured with a “cookie” – a small piece of data stored in a user's web browser. View-through rate is a measure of these view-through activities expressed as a percentage.
- 4 LANDING PAGE:** Often accessed from social media, online display ads and online search campaigns, landing pages are single web pages designed to trigger a specific conversion defined by the advertiser. Examples of conversion include signing up for a newsletter, entering to win a contest, making a purchase or submitting a phone number to be contacted by the advertiser for more information. It's called a landing page, because that's where people “land” when they click on a link or advertisement.

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- 5 ONLINE DISPLAY ADVERTISING:** Includes what are commonly known as banner ads, but can include website wallpaper ads, expandable banners and more. Online display ads appear on websites and serve as online “billboards.” They can incorporate text, logos, photos, images and even video content.
- 6 GEO-TARGETING:** Allows advertisers to reach consumers within a targeted area in proximity to their business. This practice allows for the delivery of ads into very specific geographic locations, based on a variety of criteria used to determine that location.
- 7 SEARCH ENGINE MARKETING (SEM):** Search engine marketing describes efforts at driving websites to appear higher in search engine results. Higher search engine rankings offer business greater visibility among potential customers.
- 8 SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION (SEO):** A subset of SEM, SEO is a process that helps businesses improve the search rankings of their websites by including content on their sites that’s relevant to particular keywords and popularly searched terms. SEO happens organically over time, based on the optimization of content and back-end website coding to be recognized by search engines.
- 9 PAID SEARCH ADVERTISING:** Keyword-driven online advertising in which advertisers pay to appear in search results. Most paid search campaigns are based on a cost-per-click model, where the advertiser pays only for the clicks it receives on its website from the search results.



# Practical Tips to Get Started

It helps to compare the various components of online advertising to more traditional media to understand how they work together. A website is essentially both a brochure and a storefront, inviting customers to browse, learn more about what you have to offer and finalize a purchase.

Online display ads – including banner ads – act much the same as billboards, directing consumers to pick up a brochure or visit your storefront. Search engine marketing acts much like the Yellow Pages, offering customers and potential customers the information they need to find you.

Imagine that you're a customer driving down the (digital) highway, and all the billboards (online display ads) are already tailored to your interests and locale. You might choose to follow up on a billboard that caught your attention by checking the Yellow Pages (conducting an online search) to find that business and learn more.

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# Practical Tips to Get Started

It's important that the business you've tracked down has an "open" sign on the front door. In this digital world, that means having a website, or at least a landing page, that welcomes potential customers through the front door to do business with you.

Each of the components of an online marketing strategy exists to guide customers through the purchasing cycle. A consumer may not be ready to buy a car today but wants to take a look at your dealership's inventory. A patient may not be prepared to book a cosmetic surgery appointment, but she'd like to learn more about your staff and the services you offer. Meeting those future customers where they are in the purchasing cycle increases the likelihood that they'll turn to your business over competitors when they're ready to purchase.

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# Questions to Consider About Online Advertising

- **WHY SHOULD I BE ONLINE?** If you have two or three doors into your business, but you board up one of those doors, the customers who approach that door will go somewhere else. Sure, you'll keep the customers who enter through the front door, but why would you want to turn away someone who wants to make a purchase? Consider your website one of those important doors into your business, and consider online advertising the signage that tells customers who and where you are.
- **DO I NEED TO HAVE A WEBSITE TO ADVERTISE ONLINE?** When you're flagging down potential customers with online advertising, it's important that you have somewhere to send them. If you're just getting started online or if you're developing a campaign-specific strategy, you may opt to use a simple landing page instead of a website – but you must have one of them. Consumers expect to be able to click on an ad for more information; don't leave them hanging or confused. Websites are fairly inexpensive propositions these days, and landing pages require an even smaller investment.
- **HOW DO I KNOW WHICH KIND OF ONLINE ADVERTISING ALIGNS BEST WITH MY BUSINESS GOALS?** Display advertising helps build brand awareness among potential customers, who are then more likely to use your business name when they search online for your product or service category. When you employ search engine marketing (SEM), including paid search and search engine optimization (SEO), you increase the likelihood of consumers finding you in that search.

## Questions to Consider About Online Advertising

Once they do find you, your website or landing page needs to further entice them to visit your business and purchase your product or service. Each of these three components – display advertising, SEM and SEO – plays an important role in online marketing success. Subtract just one, and the strategy falls flat. Your media professional can help you incorporate attention-getting media and mobile strategies and determine how to best weave social media into the overall marketing mix for even stronger results. Video should be high on the list, because it's the most effective way to tell an engaging story and grab customers' attention.

- **WHAT SHOULD I INCLUDE IN MY ONLINE DISPLAY ADVERTISING?** The best display ads make efficient use of space to communicate one strong message. There isn't room to tell everything about your business. Instead, focus on catching customers' attention with the one thing you'd like them to know above all else, as well as a simple call to action that tells them what to do next. The goal is to increase brand awareness, further brand engagement and drive click-throughs.

Include an offer or a strong branding message, your logo and a link to your website or landing page. The ad's design should have the same look and feel as your website. When customers click on your ad, be sure the offer that brings them to your site is highly visible. That page is an ideal place to flesh out the story that began in your display ad with additional details about your business, your location and phone number, and links to your social-media pages.

One way to capture a consumer's imagination is with dynamic options such as in-banner video and animation. When your business has a story to tell, such as a product demonstration or a testimonial, in-banner video can tell that story in the same space as a static banner ad. This tactic is particularly affordable for businesses with TV commercials that can be repurposed for online consumers. Your media partner can also help you explore the use of video pre-roll – video advertisements that appear prior to video content.



## Questions to Consider About Online Advertising

- **WHAT SHOULD I CONSIDER WHEN IT COMES TO PAID SEARCH?** There are clear benefits to keyword-driven advertising in which you pay for your business to appear in search results, including the ability to reach customers in particular industries and geographic locations, and those with specific hobbies or interests. Platforms such as Google AdWords and Bing Ads allow you to select the keywords that trigger your ad, the physical locations of the customers performing the search, where your ad will appear on the page – even the day of the week and the time of day.

These benefits are more valuable to some businesses than others. If yours is a business with high margins – auto dealership, attorney, high-end products – you’re likely to benefit from paid search. The same goes for events, seasonal businesses, retailers with a broad range of products and businesses where customers deliver high lifetime values, such as doctors and dentists.

Whether or not you opt to proceed with paid search, you can make use of resources such as [yext.com](http://yext.com) or [reputation.com](http://reputation.com) to correct your online listings and add content for the top 25 search engines.

# What's the Difference Between a Website and a Landing Page?



**Landing pages are single web pages where web surfers “land” when they click on a link from your online advertising.** These pages are

designed to convert site visitors into customers with targeted content that expands on the brief message appearing in your ad, whether it’s a promotional offer or more detailed product or service information. Since online ads must be brief, this is the ideal place to share additional information such as your business address and phone number.

**Websites are more comprehensive and include multiple pages.** They can provide consumers with much more detailed information about your business, your products, your staff—anything that will help convert them into paid customers. The more complex your products and services are, and the more information your customers require in making a purchase decision, the more important it is to have a website rather than a simple landing page. Even businesses with full websites frequently opt to create landing pages that are separate from the main website’s architecture to direct online customers based on the particular ads they’ve clicked on.

Landing pages offer the benefit of focused messaging targeted to specific consumer populations. Websites offer further opportunities to educate consumers, position your business as an authority or thought leader, establish your ties to the local community, build a database of potential customers, attract visitors through organic and paid search, and more.

## 5 QUICK TIPS

### Matching Your Online Message With Your Multi-Channel Marketing Campaign

Successful marketing campaigns develop a familiar look and feel that reflects the personality of the business and appeal to their customers. That continuity is an important part of building brand recognition among viewers. Extend that familiarity to your online advertising, and you'll be able to expand your reach and strengthen brand awareness in your market.

Here are five important tips:

1

#### **Repeat key messages**

with the same verbiage in your cable TV ad, print advertising, online and everywhere else you promote to customers.

2

**Use your logo and website address** in everything you do.



# 5 QUICK TIPS

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4

### **Establish a voice.**

The appropriate tone for lawyers and dentists won't work for concerts or family restaurants. Whatever language you use in your commercials, it should reflect your business and it should be consistent in every piece of advertising you create, including online display and search.

3

**Ads needn't be exactly alike**, but they should all appear to be part of the same family. That means a consistent color scheme and common design elements.

5

Remember that online ads may be viewed on a laptop, a tablet or a smartphone, so be sure that your **ad is easily viewable on a variety of platforms.**

# What Does Online Advertising Success Look Like?

Clicks on your online ads are certainly desirable, and a high click-through rate is a good indicator of success. But consumers frequently view an ad multiple times before they'll click on it, and it's important to understand that click-throughs are not the only way to measure success.

A study by ChoiceStream in September 2013 found that when consumers see an online ad that interests them, just 44% of those who take action do so by clicking on the ad. The rest say they take a different action, such as performing an online search for the product or company or typing the company's web address directly into their browser to visit its website.<sup>2</sup>

That's why many advertisers prefer to measure view-throughs, which take those other actions into account. Even so, it's important to understand that all advertising takes time and exposure, and it's not always as simple as following a straight path from a consumer viewing an ad, clicking on it or visiting a website and making a purchase. More likely, customers will be exposed to your ads

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across multiple channels over time, and it's impossible to say whether it was an online ad, a cable TV commercial or word of mouth that contributes to brand awareness and finally gets them in the door. The truth is, each of your efforts is likely to have played a role in the steps it takes to get them there.

Your goal may be to boost business in general, or it could be as pointed as "attract more lunchtime business on Wednesdays." Measuring success is easiest when you plan from the outset and factor those goals into the success metrics. Work with an expert marketing partner to define your goals up front and formulate the step-by-step strategies to achieve them. Your partner can help you assess your progress, measure results and adjust marketing tactics along the way to plan for ongoing success.



## Resources

<sup>1</sup> "What Consumers REALLY Think of Your Digital Advertising," *Website Magazine*, <http://www.websitemagazine.com/content/blogs/posts/archive/2013/11/05/what-consumers-really-think-of-digital-advertising.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> "Consumers Say They Respond to Online Ads With Actions Other Than Clicks," *MarketingCharts*, <http://www.marketingcharts.com/wp/online/consumers-say-they-respond-to-online-ads-with-actions-other-than-clicks-37929/>

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## About

Cox Media, a wholly owned subsidiary of Cox Communications Inc., partners with both local and national advertisers for marketing success, offering advanced cable and digital advertising products in 20 markets across the United States. In addition to proven media solutions, Cox Media offers consultative insights to help clients reach their audiences more effectively and efficiently. From broad reach, highly rated programs to lasersharp targeting of specific audiences, Cox Media is focused on developing customized marketing solutions that maximize ROI for clients.

