

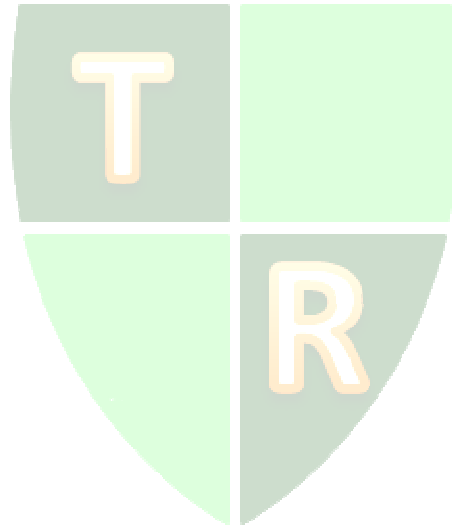
Entrepreneurial Growth: Growing Your Online Business in the Digital Era

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ABSTRACT

This article revolves around the strategies that entrepreneurs can use to market and grow their online businesses. Specifically, the article will examine the following: search engine optimization, content marketing, social media, advertising, joint ventures and email marketing.

Key Words: Technology Entrepreneurship, Digital Era, Entrepreneurial Growth, Entrepreneurship, Digital Entrepreneurship, Online Business.



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INTRODUCTION

Businesses are increasingly hungry to find new ways to grow and prosper their businesses. In the last 26 years the Internet has evolved to support \$1.915 trillion of business in 2016 and that number is expected to increase to \$4.058 trillion by 2020. It is no surprise that business owners are increasingly moving their efforts online to facilitate growth (eMarketer, 2016).

Due to its low barriers to entry, the Internet has become an increasingly competitive sector with more and more businesses popping up on the web. The purpose of this article is to assist entrepreneurs in the growth of their online businesses. To achieve this, the following areas are examined: search engine optimization, content marketing, social media, advertising, back linking, joint ventures, and email marketing.

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION (SEO)

Search engines (e.g., Google and Bing), use search engine optimization as a means of finding applicable web pages for searches. SEO is the basic format to web page searches. SEO uses algorithms to determine the hierarchy of web searches. The more a word or web page is searched the higher the frequency the web page will appear on the search engine.

As an Internet marketing strategy, SEO takes into consideration the items people search for, the actual search words or terminology typed into search engines, and which search engines have the highest preference by their respected audience. The goal is to appear first on the search engine's list when a word or phrase related to your business is inserted into the search engine. However, becoming a master of SEO is a daunting task. SEO is said to be an "alchemy for the uninitiated, but there is a science to it", which can be utilized to grow your business online (Seach Engine Land, 2015).

Periodic Table of Success Factors

Search Engine Land, a company that focuses on SEO, has created a [Periodic Table of SEO Success Factors](#), which illustrates thirty-five major factors to focus on for search engine ranking success. The table weights the importance of subgroups of "On-The-Page SEO" and "Off-The-Page SEO". On-the-page SEO includes subgroups that are entirely in the publisher's control, such as page architecture and content. Off-the-page ranking factors are those that publishers do not directly control.

Search engines use these because they learned early on that relying on publisher-controlled signals alone did not always yield the best results. For instance, some publishers may try to make themselves seem more relevant than they are. Further, this table uses a points system to determine the areas that have a heavier weight in SEO and those that have a negative effect on your website's ranking in searches. Search Engine Land's Periodic Table of Success Factors is a useful tool when attempting to enhance your SEO, while not spending the bulk of your time doing so. Attaining growth online is not a simple process, so do not make the mistake of getting too caught up in one area.

CONTENT MARKETING

“Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience — and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action” (Content Marketing Institute, 2012). It requires a well-defined target audience and attempts to deliver personalized valuable content to them. It is intended to stimulate interest in a way that is not bothersome to the viewer. For example, super bowl ads are something that people enjoy watching. They even seek them out by watching them on YouTube after they have already seen them. This is not to say that a content marketing strategy needs to be as extensive as super bowl ads, but the content, whatever it may be, should attract viewers and market a product or service to them in a way that is not bothersome.

Before diving into content marketing strategies, it is important to understand that you must stay consistent, persistent and patient with your content marketing strategy. Staying consistent means keeping your promises. If you commit to submitting a blog post once a week, make sure that you do it, so your customers have trust in you. Similarly, if you make an announcement on your podcast indicating that your next episode will air next Tuesday at 11:00, make sure it happens; otherwise, you risk losing trust in your audience.

Staying persistent means keeping up with creating new content. Even if no one is listening to your podcast today, the episode that you create today is a usable asset in the future when people start listening to you. Lastly, staying patient is important because content marketing strategies do not take off the day they are started. It may take a year before you start getting realizable returns on your content but stay patient and remain consistent and persistent and it will pay off.

Types of Content

There are as many types of content marketing as there are types of content. Below are some of the more traditional content marketing strategies. The main way of distinguishing content marketing is if people seek it out; or if people want to consume it rather than avoid it, then it's probably part of a content marketing strategy.

Infographics

These are commonly long charts that include graphics, charts, statistics, and written information. Infographics are commonly shared throughout social media sites because they are an entertaining way of learning about a topic. This is effective because it promotes your business for free when it is passed around on social media sites. Infographics generally cost thousands to make, especially if you hire a contractor to research the topic, strategize, plan, copyright and design your infographic. However, a cheaper option for startups is to make your own and post them to a Pinterest board that is related to your business.

Podcasts

Podcasts give you visibility in areas that you would have otherwise not been noticed. This can lead to increased visibility among other channels. For example, a relatively new podcast called The Investor's Podcast initially focused on studying billionaires. A few years into its existence, it has turned into one of the leading investor's podcast.

When listeners realize that they have valuable or entertaining content in their podcasts, they are more likely to buy the author's books as well, which the founders of The Investor's Podcast also have. Podcasts can also increase sales in various businesses and should be considered for content marketing strategies.

Videos

Much like podcasts, videos create a unique opportunity to offer content to viewers to attract customers. Entrepreneurs can create a YouTube channel and establish many subscribers if they are creative enough to make the content innovative and creative.

The cost of high quality video equipment has fallen, so creating professional grade videos has become easier. Many businesses start out with videos as their main content marketing strategy because they are often shared throughout social media outlets as well. Video content should be amusing, funny, shocking, informative, and/or impressive to get shares, so make sure your video content is not boring.

Books

Books are useful for content marketing strategies as well. By writing a book, you are assumed by the public, to be an expert in that area. For example, if you were to write a book about Warren Buffett, then people would assume that you are familiar with his life story. This could end with you doing speaking engagements, book tours, but more important, if you had a web site with other materials and services, it would enhance your brand.

Another example is Dale Carnegie's book *How to Make Friends and Influence People*. This book has been helpful to get people to Dale Carnegie training programs. The book has already attracted its target market and if readers like what is in it, then they will seek out more content from the source.

With self-publishing becoming more user friendly on the Internet, it is becoming easier to write and sell books. Even if your book is not great, you are now introduced as "Author of ..." which creates recognition with your name and further your brand. So, do not be afraid to write a book.

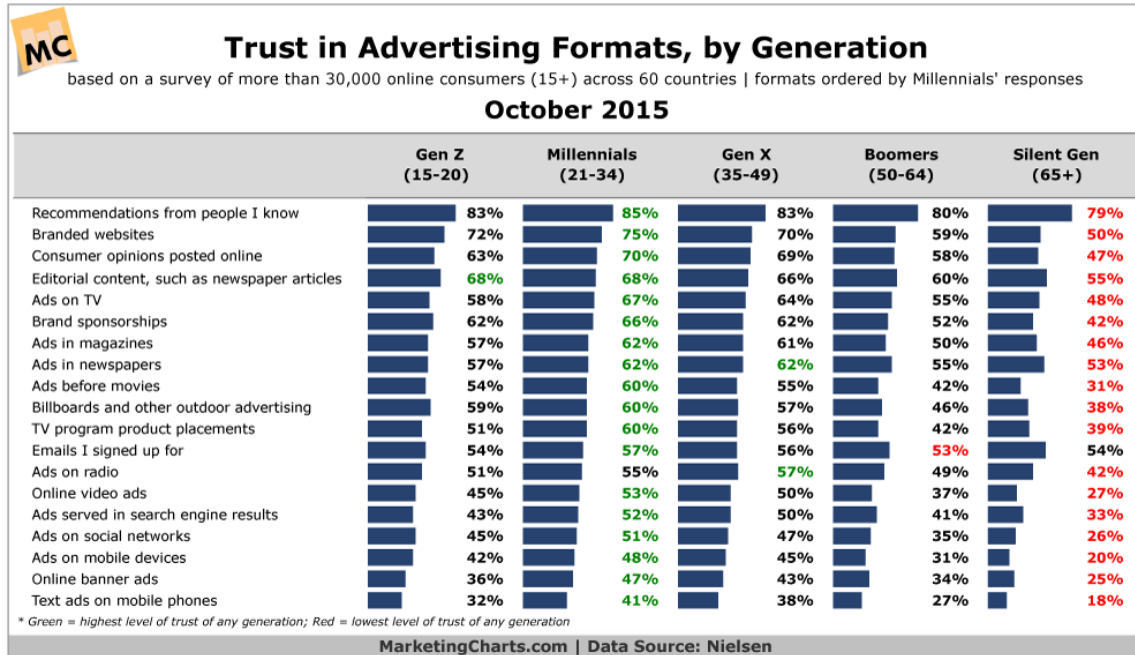
As stated previously, there are as many types of content marketing. Below are some more ideas for your content market strategy (McGill, 2018). Just remember, it should be content that individuals seek out rather than avoid.



Source: (Outboost Media, 2016)

Trust in Different Forms of Advertising

Content marketing should feel trustworthy. In other words, it should not feel spammy or as though the advertiser is simply trying to make a sale. There should be value in it for the viewer and they should want to see it rather than avoid it. The chart below is from a survey that Nielsen – a survey company – performed in 2015. It depicts the trust in different forms of content by generation, so once you have established a target market you can use this to determine what form of content marketing would best fit your strategy.



Source: (Marketing Charts, 2015)

SOCIAL MEDIA

There are multiple social media platforms that entrepreneurs can utilize to grow their businesses. It is not sufficient to simply produce effective content and hope that the right audience stumbles upon it. Eighty-one percent of Americans and 2.61 billion people worldwide use social media. Moreover, most of these users visit the sites daily and have more than one social media account (Statista, 2018). Additionally, social media sites are user heavy, they often include valuable analytical tools, which are for useful for getting your content in front of a relevant audience rather than using guesswork.

Facebook

Facebook is a powerful social media site that is useful for promoting businesses and targeting specific customers. Currently, it is the most visited social media site and it has 1.94 billion users worldwide that spend an average of 40 minutes per day on the site (Zephoria, 2017). It has a variety of digital media platforms that optimize promotional capabilities. From text and pictures to videos and music, Facebook creates the perfect environment to portray brand image and make it visible to specific target markets. Below are a few effective ways to promote your business with a business Facebook page.

Detailed Profile

Use your business's logo as the profile picture and have a catchy cover photo that depicts your business's appearance. Type a few sentences that describe your business and

make sure to have all the business's information up to date always – phone number, address, website link, etc.

Posts

To gain public interest, you will want your business' Facebook page to have as many followers as possible. An effective way to get followers is by posting content that grabs your followers' attention. The best posts are visual and short. "Facebook's Page Insights tool helps take the guesswork out of sharing. The tool, accessible from your Facebook Page's Admin menu, provides valuable information on follower activity" (Nuckles, 2013). For example, this analytical tool can tell you what time most people view your content, so you can plan your promotions. Facebook also provides a scheduled posts tool, so you do not have to spend your time maintaining your business's Facebook page.

Hashtags

Hashtags are hyperlinks represented by the '#' symbol followed by a word or expression with no spaces. By clicking on a hashtag, it will take you to the hashtag's page where all other hashtags with that word or expression have been posted. For example, hash tagging #marketing would put your post in conversation with those interested in business and marketing strategy. Making posts with hashtags related to your business can get more relevant eyes on your page with little effort and no expense.

Create Engaging Images

"The brain processes images 60,000 times faster than it does text", so it is a no brainer to create engaging images for promotional use (Ritu, 2015). Furthermore, posts that have visual content get 94% more views than those that rely solely on text (Pant, 2015). However, designing and editing impressive images can be timely and require advanced applications. Canva is a free online design tool to help you create engaging images that demand attention and save you money (Karasiewicz, 2014).

Invest in Facebook Ads

On top of creating a visible profile, you can choose to pay for Facebook Ads, which appear on users' news feeds. The ads appear as promotional posts and direct anyone who clicks on them straight to the business's webpage if a call to action button is installed. Call to action buttons are hyperlinks commonly seen as 'See here!', 'Book Now!' and many others.

Promoted Posts

If your startup is in the early stages, a good alternative to Facebook ads, is promoted posts. "For as little as \$5 per post, the promoted content is labeled "sponsored" and will appear higher in your audience's newsfeed for a longer period of time" (Garner, 2013). Check out Facebook's Ad manager if you are interested in utilizing promoted pots.

Boosted Posts

Boosted posts are a more simplified version of promoted posts. For a small fee, you can boost your business page's past posts, which is effectively sharing the post to a greater number of people than the amount that currently follows you. Facebook Insights tool will let you know what posts are performing best and will recommend to 'boost' them.

Utilize Page Insights

Like Google Analytics, Facebook's Page Insights provides metric data. The great thing about Facebook is we all enter information about ourselves, such as activities we enjoy, age, gender, and much more. This makes it easy for businesses to access and present us targeted content that is relevant to us. Page Insights helps business owners utilize this data. For instance, it will help you understand what posts encourage the most engagement from your followers and what time people are reading your posts the most (Heijmans, 2015). If you are investing in promoted or boosted posts, or even Facebook Ads, Page Insights is a mandatory tool.

Twitter

Twitter is an online social media platform that allows users to "share short, bite-sized updates about their lives" (eMarketer, 2016). Twitter pages are a little like blogs, but shorter. The posts are 141 characters or less of character informational content, pictures, videos and hashtags. Twitter offers another channel to get followers to promote your brand. However, getting followers once your Twitter page is complete can be time consuming, but nonetheless is an important step in using Twitter as a tool to grow your business in the online sector. Although there are hundreds of ways to increase your followers, here are a few ways the experts have shared.

Tweet to Yourself Before You Go Big

It is a good idea to make Tweets to yourself before launching your Twitter page (before following anyone else). This is important because you do not want to announce your Twitter page and then have a shockwave of viewers who see inactivity. This can look unprofessional and stray away potential followers.

Grow Your Numbers Equally

This means do not go following hundreds of people when you have zero followers. "It reeks of desperation when you are following hundreds but no one's following you back" (Schembari, 2011). So, make sure that following others is used as a networking device, not to simply get people to follow you back.

Direct People to Your Twitter Account

By having “Follow me on Twitter” hyperlinks in blogs, email signatures, and other social media outlets on the web you can attract followers. This is especially a good idea to add to your content marketing ads. Remember, people seek out content marketing, so when they see a hyper link at the end of an entertaining piece of content, they will likely follow you on Twitter to seek out more appealing content.

Use a Social Media Time Saving Tool to Schedule Tweets

Free and low-cost tools like Hootsuite allow you to schedule your tweets in advance to help you maintain a consistent flow of content, while saving time. People who post content on a regular basis tend to see more engagement and followers.

Use Twitter Analytics

Twitter analytics help you measure how well your content is performing, how much engagement it is receiving, and it provides you with relevant information about your audience. It has three main sections: Account home, tweet activity dashboard, and audience insights dashboard.

Account home is your Twitter report card, with high-level statistics tracked from month-to-month. It is also a gallery of your best tweets. It spotlights your top-performing Tweets and introduces you to the influencers in your network.

Tweet activity dashboard is like the insights tool on Facebook. It is where you find metrics for every single one of your Tweets. You will know exactly how many times Twitter users have seen, retweeted, liked, and replied to each Tweet.

The audience insights dashboard contains valuable information about the people who follow you on Twitter. You can track your follower growth over time and learn more about your followers' interests and demographics to better target your audience (Twitter, 2017).

Use Quick Promote

Quick promote enables you to quickly promote your best content or high performing tweets to a wider audience “...without having to use the full Twitter ads campaign work flow” (Twitter, 2017). It is very similar to the boosted and promoted posts on Facebook previously mentioned. Twitter recommends using quick promote when your engagement rates are high because there is likely a broader audience that would be interested in what you have to say or offer (Twitter, 2017).

Instagram

Instagram is based around photographs and video content for smartphones. Like Facebook and Twitter, everyone who creates an Instagram account has a profile and news feed. However, contrary to Twitter and Facebook, Instagram is primarily made for iOS and Android devices. It can also be accessed from computers in a view only setting, but users can only post content from their iOS and Android devices.

It is a powerful tool to promote online business growth. For instance, “Instagram is expected to generate \$500 billion in mobile advertising sales in 2018 according to forecasting firm eMarketer” (Kathleen Chaykowski, 2015). Also, “... 60 percent of users say they discover new products on Instagram” (Instagram, 2017). Below, are a few ways to harness the power of Instagram to grow your business online.

Stay Recognizable with a Consistent Name and Photo

Just as with Facebook and Twitter you should make your profile name the same as your business’s name and your profile picture the same as your brand logo. A thumbnail of your profile picture along with your Instagram account’s name will appear above each of your posts and you will want viewers to be able to associate the post with your brand.

Include an Informative and Interesting Bio That Hooks Followers

Your bio should include your business’s name and a brief description of what you do. It should lay out “...who you are + what you do + a pop of personality ...” (Daley, 2015). Additionally, at the end of your bio, you should include your business’s website, so viewers can simply click the hyperlink to the website.

Connect it with Your Other Social Media Channels

Instagram allows you to connect any posts you make to your Twitter and Facebook accounts. “That way, any image you share on Instagram will automatically post to those profiles, and people can click to see your Instagram stream, like an image, comment on it, or follow your brand” (Emerson, 2014).

Make Sure Your Photographs are High Quality

Using poor quality photos or videos is a sure way to curb engagement on Instagram. So, use photos and videos that grab viewers’ attention. That means using high quality content, which can be captured with low-cost camera equipment and minimal Photoshop skills. Free apps, such as Gopro’s Quick app and VSCO Cam for iOS and Android make photoshopping and video editing a breeze. Furthermore, use captivating shades of blue – yes, blue the color – in your photos. Small business expert Melinda Emerson reports “images on Instagram that had blue as the dominant color got 24% more likes than other colors” (Emerson, 2014). Lastly, make sure your videos are no more than a minute long or you risk losing your viewers’ attention.

Use Hashtags

Just as Twitter and Facebook utilize hashtags, so does Instagram. If you click on someone’s hashtag it will take you to all posts that have applied the same hashtag, which can draw viewers to your page. “The more specific you can get, while still staying with a frequently used hashtag, the more successful you will be at attracting an engaged and on-point audience” (Phillips, 2017). Therefore, do not use simple hashtags such as #love,

#summer, #birthday, etc. Instead, look at what the most popular companies in your niche are using as hashtags and start using them. This will help to get relevant eyes on your page.

Portray Your Brand

Do not post content that is irrelevant to your brand. Get a personal account for that. For your business you need to post pictures and videos that portray your brand image. For example, if your company is about a surfing lifestyle and sells swim ware, then post pictures of destination beaches and people surfing. Instagram provides you the opportunity to make an image of your brand, so use it wisely (Emerson, 2014).

Use Insight Analytics

Like the other social media channels discussed previously, Instagram business accounts include Insight analytics to "... help you measure the impact of your marketing efforts" ... "to see if there is something you need to do differently -- like target a different audience, post at a certain time of day, or experiment with a new content format" (Zantal-Wiener, 2018). Instagram's Insights include account, post, and story analytics.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn was initially designed to help individuals in the job market find jobs, as well as to support hiring managers in finding the right individuals for unfilled positions. Further, it serves as a networking device to professionals. It has evolved into much more than this though, and it can be utilized to generate growth in your business. "From making connections to generating leads, establishing partnerships and creating better brand awareness, LinkedIn makes an invaluable addition to your digital marketing strategy" (Angeles, 2014). However, its users are a much different audience than the social media platforms mentioned. They require a different approach in your marketing campaign. Here are a few ways we recommend using LinkedIn to generate growth in your business.

Promote Your Company Page

Once you have created a company page, announce it to your network on your personal LinkedIn page. Also have your current employees follow your page. This will cause engagement with your employees on your company page. "Social Media Today reports that content shared by employees receives eight times the engagement as brand shared content" (Chamber 360, 2017). Lastly, include a link to your company page in the footer of emails and newsletters (Chamber 360, 2017).

Use Company Page Analytics

Parallel to the previously mentioned social media platforms, LinkedIn has analytical tools. Use these to determine what posts receive the best engagement, what time of day your posts get the most attention, get more demographic information about your target

audience and to benchmark the growth of your follower base against competitor companies (Lazzaroni, 2014). Page analytics are key to gain insights on how to best optimize your content for your audience.

Target Sales Prospects

LinkedIn is especially useful for finding the exact person you need to talk to in order to make a sale. This is particularly true for B2C firms. Oftentimes the gatekeeper (front desk, assistant, etc.) prevents sales people from even reaching the right person when cold calling a company or making an appearance at a firm. However, with LinkedIn, you can simply go to the company's page and figure out exactly whom you need to speak with to make a sale. Be careful though, LinkedIn's audience, in general, does not appreciate sales-like messages or spammy ads over LinkedIn, so we recommend using this simply as a targeting device.

Pinterest

Pinterest is another multi-media (mostly images) based social media application but is more like traditional magazine catalogues infused into the Internet than it is to other photo sharing social media applications, such as Instagram. You could also compare it to a pin board. In fact, that is what it is based around. Users create 'boards', which are subject based content holders; and 'pins', which are the multi-media content placed on boards. For example, you can have a board labeled "Recipes" and pin images and videos of recipes to it. Further, you can even attach the recipes in text to each Pin, so viewers know how to make the pinned recipe when they click on it. Like other social media platforms, Pinterest users interact with each other through comments, likes, and repining each other's content. Here are a few ways to utilize Pinterest in your marketing campaigns:

Use Promoted Pins

Along with the many other social media platforms, Pinterest too, has promoted posts that cost the advertiser money. Promoted Pins get "... displayed in front of more people to increase brand awareness, engagement, and traffic to websites and landing pages" (Mialki, 2018). Pinterest also has another type of promoted pins – One-Tap Promoted pins, which take the person that clicks on the pin straight to the pinner's website or landing page rather than to the pin itself.

Utilize Pinterest Analytics

Once you have created a business Pinterest account, you can access Pinterest Analytics. Pinterest Analytics gives you valuable insights about what your viewers want to see. It tells you how many times people have saved your pins, what other content they like, and how much traffic your account receives. Further, you will get detailed metrics about your audience, which makes them easier to target through other channels. If you decide to include Pinterest in your social media marketing campaign, make sure you do not pass up on its analytical abilities.

YouTube

YouTube is a social media video-sharing site, where people go to look up relevant videos based on keywords, upload videos to their ‘channel’, or advertise their businesses and ideas. Users interact with each other by liking, commenting and re-sharing each other’s content. The website also serves as a video intermediary for other websites – meaning you can use it to upload videos onto your YouTube channel and then place them on your website, blog, or other social media accounts. In fact, most of the online videos today are YouTube videos. YouTube is a Google subsidiary that has over one billion users, so it presents entrepreneurs with a real opportunity for growth (Patel, 2016). There are several ways to use YouTube to promote your business, but here are a few that others have found especially useful.

In general, there are two kinds of YouTube ads: ‘skippable and non-skippable ads’ (Patel, 2016). Non-skippable ads are ads that people are forced to watch all the way through – meaning you cannot hit a skip button. These get a bad reputation because they feel forced to the viewer and they are, but they can also provide you with brand awareness and sales if you create an effective ad. Skippable ads (TrueView ads) are ads that allow the viewer to hit the skip button. They are meant to grab the viewers’ attention, so you watch the ad all the way through. Done correctly, and these can provide you with traffic on your website and other platforms.

To get people to subscribe to your YouTube channel you need to post valuable content. This means consistently posting content that a specific target market finds valuable. For example, if you are a bike company, you could post videos of proper bike maintenance, which your target market would find useful. It doesn’t have to be professional grade or even high quality. For instance, many famous YouTube channels are shot with iPhones and GoPro cameras.

Make use of YouTube Analytics to determine what posts are working well and then pay to have them promoted, so more people see them. Further, pay attention to what you title your videos because the titles are used by YouTube to match videos to visitors’ search queries (Lawson, 2011).

Google+

Google+ is Google’s leading social network. It is like Facebook, but it is different in one key aspect. It is more of an informational network rather than a social network. Google+ users utilize its benefits for meeting others with similar interest rather than to connect with friends and socialize. It is an asymmetrical network – meaning it allows people to follow others without them following or ‘friending’ back much like Instagram and Twitter, whereas Facebook and LinkedIn are symmetrical – meaning they require reciprocity (Mangles, 2017).

In 2013, Google+ claimed that it had 540 million monthly active users, however “...it has slowly become an infrastructure for all Google products, with profiles immediately created when a user opens a Gmail account. More realistic figures are believed to be of 2.2 billion users, only 4-6 million of them are active” (Mangles, 2017). With only 4-6 million active users, Google+ might seem like a waste of your time, but here are a few ways it can help grow your online business.

Improve Your SEO on Google

Each post of content on Google+ has its own URL – meaning it can appear in the search engine results pages (SERPs) of Google. Also, Google ranks its own products higher in its search engine and as a result your posted content is more likely to be ranked *higher* (Mangles, 2017).

Hangouts and Circles

Google+ Hangouts are live video chat streams that allow you to have up to 10 people in a live hangout and can be private or open to the public to watch. Private Hangouts – otherwise known as Google+ Video Hangouts – are great for a more personalized version of conference calls, job recruitment, and group meetings. Public Hangouts – or Google+ Hangouts on Air – are useful tools for your content marketing strategy. You can have live Q&A's, announce new products or make a webinar (Hines, 2015). However, be sure to announce these on your other social media platforms due to the small number of Google+ users. Further, unlike other social media platforms Google+ Circles allow you to decide exactly who sees the content you are posting. So, if you are posting content that is only related to a small niche within your network, it could be annoying to others.

Snapchat

Snapchat is an early stage social media platform made for Android and iOS devices. It emphasizes pictures and videos, which are only available for a short period of time. Although Snapchat was originally focused on private, person-to-person photo sharing, you can now use it for a range of different tasks, including sending short videos, live video chatting, messaging, creating caricature-like Bitmoji avatars, and sharing photos and videos via a chronological story that is broadcasted to all your followers” (Betters, 2018). For this reason, it is a viable tool for creating growth in your company. However, it should be noted that Instagram has created similar features and has the potential to make Snapchat unnecessary. Here are a few ways to use Snapchat.

Partner with Influencers

Influencers, such as celebrities, have influence over potential target markets and are useful for implementing into your marketing strategy. This is especially true with social media and specifically Snapchat. People enjoy seeing their idols day-to-day lives in their Snapchat stories, so they follow them and watch what happens behind the scenes on a regular basis. By identifying whom your target markets' influencers are and implementing their Snapchat stories into your marketing strategy, you can obtain a hard to reach audience and realize growth in your company.

Provide Access to Live and Private Events

When running events, recording Snapchat stories is an effective way to showcase the event to your followers that may not be attending the event. It provides access to the event from a unique view that feels raw and anti-spammy. If the event is a private event, it's even more attractive because it gives followers a sneak peak of an exclusive event.

Snapchat Ads are content marketing in its most natural form. They are a maximum of 10 seconds long video clips and they provide the option to the viewer to see more content by swiping up. From there you can provide longer videos and ways of interacting with your brand for the user. "And research conducted by MediaScience found that Snapchat video ads delivered more than two times the lift in purchase intent compared with TV and other popular social platforms" (Newberry, 2017). Also, promoted posts on Snapchat are like promoted posts on Facebook. They show up in Snapchat user's screen just below their organic stories. Users have the option of clicking on them like snap ads, they can swipe up to see more content.

ADVERTISING

Online advertising is one of the most effective ways for entrepreneurs to achieve growth in their businesses in the online sector. The Internet is filled with ads. In fact, online ads have increased by 87 percent in just the last five years and Google claims to achieve 95 percent of its revenues from online ads alone (MarketingHub, 2016). So, there is value in online advertising. However, there are several ways to advertise online. The most effective channels are the following.

PPC Advertising

Pay-per-click (PPC) advertising is an online advertising technique where advertisers bid against each other to have their advertisements posted on websites where their target audience is likely to visit, or on search engines based on keywords they might enter. The advertisers pay the amount they bid each time their ads are clicked on and someone visits their site. "In a way, it is a way of buying visits to your site, rather than earning them organically" (Mialki, 2018). Google AdWords and Bing Ads are the two most popular PPC advertising networks, but PPC advertisements are all over the web. Google is clearly the more dominant search engine and grabs most of the market share, but Bing has 33 percent of the U.S market and is less than half the cost to advertise on, so you should not overlook it.

Social media platforms implement PPC channels as well and include distinctive targeting techniques that are not available on AdWords or other platforms. "Instead of focusing on specific keywords, advertisers can dig deeper and target individual's interests and likes which is not possible on traditional PPC networks" (Andrew, 2018). So, check out Facebook Ads, Twitter Ads, or Instagram Ads if your target market spends a lot of time on social media. Lastly, there are a number other networks such as AdRoll, Bidvertiser, RevContent, that offer PPC advertising, so do not get too caught up on one single network.

Display Advertising

Display advertisements are ads placed on third party sites in the form of banner, text, or image. They can be placed anywhere on the page – top, middle, bottom, right, ETC. – and are used to target specific audiences. They are like digital billboards. They are usually connected to a landing page, where an offer is made on the company’s website. Display ads have lower click through rates than PPC advertisements, but they also cost significantly less in most cases. Although they do not produce as many clicks, display ads produce brand awareness because they are clearly visible even if they are not clicked on. Display ads are not simply placed on third party websites through guesswork. Advertisers implement remarketing (AKA retargeting) to determine where to place these ads. Remarketing involves using tracking cookies to follow web surfers around the web and then placing highly relevant ads in front of them on third party sites. Google AdWords and Bing Ads are an effective place to start with remarketing and display ads, but many other Networks offer remarketing and display ads as well. Some of these include AdRoll, Retargeter, and SiteScout.

EMAIL MARKETING

Email marketing has been a bit out of control for the past decade. That is why many entrepreneurs are overlooking its full potential to generate sales for their businesses. They do not want to produce a spammy reputation for their brand. There is some truth that email marketing can make you look spammy, but done correctly, you can generate impressive returns. In fact, “...email marketing is one of the most effective digital marketing channels available, providing brands with an ROI of up to 4300%” (Mialki, 2018). Here are a few best practices for your email marketing campaign.

To send out email blasts and generate returns, you will need several emails. To persuade people to hand over their emails you will need to have a display box on your website that makes an offer in return for the users’ email. These typically include a newsletter, product updates, beta testing, free downloads, free eBooks, and/or update lists. It should not seem as though your intention is to gain their email, but that the email is the source in which you provide your service (newsletter, updates, ETC). You should also have a requirement for an email address when people order from your website.

Get Added to Address Books

To make sure your emails do not end up in your audience’s junk folders, you need to get added to your target’s address books. To do this, always make sure you personalize emails. This means addressing the email to the first name of the recipients and customizing the “From” line. Do not use desperate subject lines, such as “Last Chance to Save!”. This is a sure way to get chucked into your audience’s junk boxes. Instead, use a subject line that gives hints at the content contained in the email. This makes your brand seem friendly and personal rather than spammy.

Once you have a subscriber list, you will need to segment the members into different groups, so you do not send the wrong content to an audience that is not relevant. For example, if your business is a fashion company, you do not want to send out information and graphics of a newly released line of women’s dresses to your whole subscribers list if it also includes males. Instead, have multiple lists of segmented

subscribers ready for emails. If you already have a large subscriber list and this seems like a daunting task try out ConstantContact, MailChimp, or AWeber. For a monthly subscription, they each include a surplus of email marketing services with segmenting being one of them.

Your emails should be clear and captivating, and your audience should want to see the content. This starts with the subject line. The content in the email itself should cover the benefits of what you are marketing, not just the features. It should be brief and easy to look at. Using images and short expressions makes it quick, easy, and appealing for the reader to obtain what you are offering. Also, use hyper linked buttons, such as “View Deal Here” that link to the specific page on your website where the deal is located. Lastly, if you promised a newsletter, updates, or anything else, make sure you provide that content.

CONCLUSION

This article serves as an introduction to the current strategies entrepreneurs can use to grow their online businesses. With the Internet and technology continually evolving in this digital era, there are increasingly more ways for online entrepreneurs to create growth. It is crucial to stay informed on these evolving techniques and keep an eye on where your target market spends their time, so you can deliver relevant messages and thereby, facilitate growth.

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