

Guide to



Internet Marketing

By Kerim Tumay



Technology Multipliers

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Table of Contents

What is Internet Marketing?	2
Content Marketing	3
Web Site	6
Search Marketing	9
Email Marketing	11
Social Media	14
Web Analytics	15
Keys to Success	17



What is Internet Marketing?

The sales process for technology products is complex. It involves a group of technical buyers, economic buyers, and influencers (analysts, consultants, partners, buyers' social networks). And, the typical buying cycle for a technology product is long. It may take anywhere between 6-18 months from awareness to evaluation, decision making, and contract.



CHART 1. KEY ELEMENTS OF INTEGRATED INTERNET MARKETING

It is important to be found by potential buyers in the early research phases of the buying cycle, when they are searching for products and services that can address their needs. And guess where the research begins – online! It is just as critical to maintain the internet marketing presence throughout the entire buying cycle.

Regardless of whether the buyer is technical or economic, you can be sure that just about every person involved in the buying process is technically savvy. He/she will be visiting your web site, searching in Google, Yahoo, or Bing, attending webinars hosted by analysts and industry experts, and asking opinions of colleagues and friends in their social networks such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter.

So, throughout the sales process, how can a small or mid-size technology company increase and maintain its product's visibility to potential buyers on the internet? How do you inform and engage your target audience with relevant, useful content? How do you optimize your social media efforts for search engines? How do you build trust and loyalty to guide the buyers from awareness to purchase? The answer is -- through an integrated marketing strategy, programs, and analytics.



Content Marketing

In recent years, popularity of content marketing has dramatically increased. Contributing factors include:

- blogging by subject matter experts using do-it-yourself web publishing tools like WordPress
- cost-effectiveness and increasing quality of free webinars
- benefits of Search Engine Optimization on product-specific web sites or micro sites
- major search engines offering universal search features that categorize search results by documents, images, videos, news, blogs, etc.
- the popularity of content sharing sites such as YouTube for videos and SlideShare for presentations
- the growth of online social media networks and community forums,

The power of content marketing comes from adding value through the publishing, search engine optimization, and sharing of relevant, useful content. The best content marketing programs utilize a combination of online and offline. Relevant and useful content leads to effective social media marketing through sharing and open discussions creating a ‘high buzz-index’. Content marketing enables small businesses and even startups to establish authority, trust and loyalty in a matter of months instead of years.

Technology products typically have long sales cycles ranging from 6-18 months. From awareness and interest, to evaluation and decision making phases, an effective content marketing program can lead a prospect through the sales funnel to the buying decision.



CHART 2. CONTENT MARKETING AND THE BUYING CYCLE



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Content on your website, blogs, webinars, e-newsletters, presentations, podcasts, white papers, micro sites, and videos all play a role in engaging, informing, persuading, and pulling a technology buyer from the awareness phase to the buying decision. So, the content program must include as many content types as possible.

Balanced content coverage for each phase in the buying cycle is necessary from initial awareness to decision. However, since technology buyers spend almost half of the sales cycle in the so-called “consideration” or “evaluation” phase, it is important to build the content marketing program around this phase.

One of the most critical aspects of the content marketing program is the vocabulary. Start with a complete list of concepts, named entities such as product names, codes, or model numbers, and keywords. Then, define synonyms and related concepts. Finally, organize the vocabulary in a taxonomy. This taxonomy is not only useful for tagging the content on your website but also for search engine optimization.

Traceability of content usage by each unique user is another key consideration. This can help in many ways. Knowing how many different content types were consumed, the date, time, and frequency of consumption, may be invaluable information in the sales process. Knowing how many people from the same organization engaged with the content may also be quite useful.

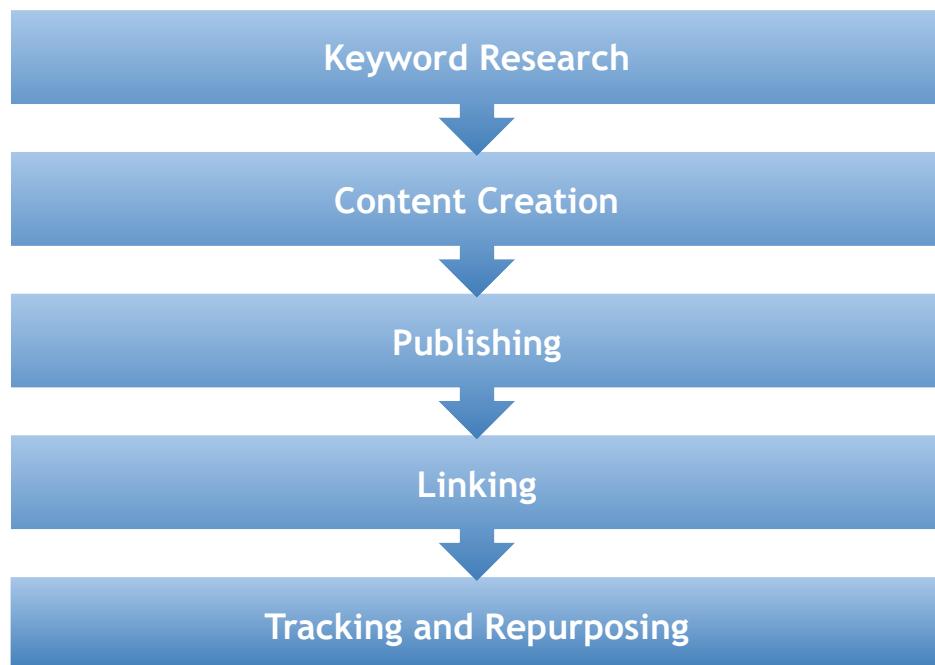


CHART 3. CONTENT MARKETING PROCESS

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Another benefit of tracing the usage is the ability to fine tune based on implicit and explicit feedback. Implicit feedback can come from web analytics tools. Explicit feedback can come from a response to a simple question such as "Was this useful?" Unique actions and interactions of users with content may provide valuable clues to improve the content as well as the content marketing program. These clues and ability to fine tune can make a huge impact in closing sales for technology products with long sales cycles.

How each type and piece of content will benefit search-based marketing, web site, e-mail marketing, and social media programs is essential to the integrated online marketing strategy. Successful content marketing programs are almost always synched up with social media programs that lead to sharing and conversations and search-based marketing programs that generate traffic, leads, and conversions.



Web Site

The web site must be at the core of any product marketing strategy. Like “All roads lead to Rome”, all internet marketing programs need to be linked to the web site. Whether a user starts with the web site or ends up at the web site, it is the single most important aspect of marketing new products today.

According to DomainTools.com, there are over 128 million active web sites. 90 million plus operating in the .com generic top level domain. So, what makes your web site valuable and relevant to your target audience? Does the site offer current and useful information about the new product for different buyer personas?

According to Nielson, visitors spend less than 25 seconds on a page and read less than 20% of the content. 1 in 5 visitors will leave a site in the first 5 seconds. Would a visitor stay on the site for more than a few seconds? Would he/she come back? Does the site have good or poor search engine visibility? Are the social media profiles and programs effectively promoting the site? Is the site instrumented with analytics and survey tools to capture visitor information and feedback?

Below are four key considerations for attracting and keeping visitors to your site:

First Impressions

- Would a visitor stay for more than a few seconds? Would he/she come back? Bookmark it? Share with a colleague?
- Is the layout attractive? Balance? Contrast? Fonts? Colors? Keywords to content ratio?
- Is the content engaging and informing? Are the benefits of the solutions/products/services clear?
- Is the content fresh or does the site look stale?
- Is the site following general web standards? Do the pages load in less than 4 seconds?

128

Millions of Active Websites,
90+ Million .com Domains



1 in 5 Visitors Will Leave a Site in the First 5 Seconds



Functionality

- Does clicking on the logo take user to home page?
- How easy is it to navigate the site and find things?
- Are the bread crumbs useful?
- Is the user guided to proper destinations for CTA (call-to-action)?
- Is the Contact form simple and functional?
- Is there a way for the user to provide feedback?
- Is there a site search function? Is it useful?

Search Engine Visibility

- Are the URLs clean? Are the keywords in the URLs relevant to the product/service related topics that are discovered in keyword research?
- Are there Title and Description tags on each and every page? Are they unique and relevant to the page?
- Are there at least 200 words on the content pages except the form pages?
- Is there at least one image on each content page? Do the images have relevant alt-tags?
- Is there a Sitemap? Is there a link in the footer region of all pages? Is the Sitemap.xml submitted to Google, Yahoo, Bing?

Convert Qualified Visits to Leads

- Which visitor paths define “a qualified visit”?
- Are the navigation elements, bread crumbs, internal links, and images useful to guide the visitor down the qualified paths?
- Are the CTA verbs prominent and inviting?
- What are the CTAs? Request Demo, Download White Paper, Register for Webinar, Contact
- What visitor info is required vs. optional? Is the form asking for too much info? Is there a quick contact form?
- Is it clear to the user as to what's going to happen when they Submit the form?
- Are the contact forms working?



8 Things That Make a Visitor Leave Your Site

- Failure to establish credibility
- Slow loading pages
- Difficult to navigate and use
- Confusing messaging
- Annoying ads or pop-ups
- Outdated content, broken links
- Links take visitors off-site!
- Lacks CTA verbs that generate interaction



Ultimately, the web site's value is measured by guiding the potential buyers to the purchasing decision.

Here's an ideal scenario that moves a visitor from awareness to interest and to serious consideration mode. The first visit may take a minute or two. Visitor bookmarks the site because he/she finds it valuable and relevant. The second visit may result in the download of a white paper. The third visit results in registration for a webinar, the four or fifth for a newsletter. Each and every action is an indication of trust and loyalty which are absolutely critical to selling technology products with long and complex sales cycles. Now, imagine multiple people from the same company are engaged in similar behaviors. Imagine the power of knowing that's happening over the same period of time and from different customer locations. That is the power of your website with properly configured web analytics.

Realizing the significance of the web site, savvy small and medium size companies create new product-specific web sites or custom micro sites for new product commercialization.



Search Marketing

Search is the universally understood method of navigating the information on the internet. According to Google, the most popular web search engine, it serves over 59 million unique visitors each month, and about 200 million search queries per day.

67 percent of clickthroughs come from organic search results. Technology buyers, unlike average consumers, are keenly aware of the difference between sponsored links and organic search results so they are even less likely to click on paid advertising links. Yet, advertisers spent over \$12 billion dollars in 2009 on paid search advertising (Source: eMarketer.com). Why? Because search constitutes the database of your buyers' intentions and search connects buyers with sellers at a high level of relevancy and immediacy.

Most product marketers are quite savvy with paid search by now. However, technology marketers need to pay special attention to trends and new developments in vertical search, blended (universal) search and semantic search to be in front of potential buyers.

Vertical search is search within a slice of the web focused solely on a particular industry vertical. For example, GlobalSpec is a vertical search engine for engineering and technical content.

With blended search, results are organized across different kinds organic search results based on media types (images, videos), and genres (news, blogs).

With semantic search, user intent is extracted from the query terms, results ranked based on relevance, and related information and concepts are presented alongside the search results.

“ if your product or business can't be found on search engines, you basically don't exist



Guide to Internet Marketing

Creating and maintaining persistent internet presence via search marketing requires a comprehensive search strategy that involves organic, paid search, vertical search, directory search, and site search. Linking the search strategy with the web site, content marketing, and social media strategies as well as off-line programs is critical to successful search marketing.

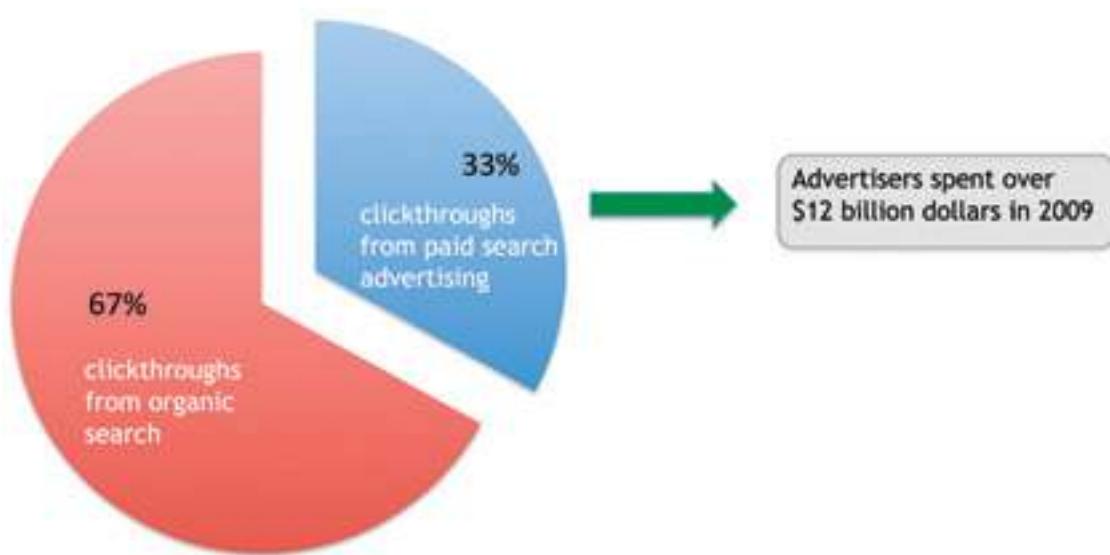


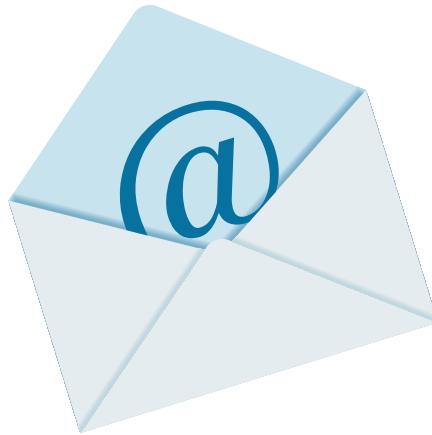
CHART 4. ORGANIC VS. PAID SEARCH



Email Marketing

Why Email Marketing?

Every business needs to optimize the ways to communicate with the customer. Email marketing is one of several marketing communication tools which businesses utilize to connect to different segments of buyer personas. Whether it begins with a confirmation opt-in message, a follow up email asking for webinar feedback, or a monthly newsletter, email is one of the best ways to create and maintain a personal touch with potential buyers and customers.



“ Make the most of every touchpoint with customers and prospects by asking them to sign up to your email list.

*Tamara Gielen
Plantoengage.com*

Use of email marketing as a part of inbound marketing activities is not a new tactic. However, there are many challenges with adding email marketing to the internet marketing mix. Incoherent or inconsistent messages from different media, too frequent or irrelevant emails, and poor deliverability are just a few of the challenges.



Challenges of Email Marketing

1. Integrating Email Marketing with Marketing Strategy

Marketers have the challenge of linking different internet marketing tools in a coherent and consistent fashion. Most businesses use email marketing to promote events such as webinars. Unfortunately, the use of email marketing starts and ends there for most companies.

2. Improving Deliverability

Marketers need to have their email lists free of inactive emails. Even if you acquired emails in a legitimate manner, the abandoned addresses may have morphed into spam traps. Aside from all the ISP problems, low deliverability rate also means you are wasting money sending messages to nonexistent addresses.

3. Growing Subscriber List

As the subscriber list grows, the marketers face a challenge of having email databases with large numbers of subscribers that are not properly segmented. Email marketing lists need to be segmented for different buyer personas in order to send the right message to the right audience.

4. Achieving Measurable ROI

Integrating different marketing platforms to calculate the ROI is an industry wide challenge. There are so many indicators and measurements for each marketing tool which can lead to disjointed marketing analytics.

5. Using Email for Funnel Optimization

Email marketing can be optimized in a marketing mix of social media, SEO and other marketing instruments.



Email Marketing Process

For email marketing to be effective, it must be viewed as a process, defined, managed, and continuously improved.

- ✓ **Develop email marketing strategy:** Focus on the big picture and align the email marketing strategy with the overall marketing strategy.
- ✓ **Select platform:** Define email marketing KPIs (clicks, leads, CTR, etc.) and select the best platform to optimize target KPIs.
- ✓ **Integrate with other Internet Marketing tools:** Make sure email marketing campaign is aligned with the other marketing tools such as Website and Social Media.
- ✓ **Ensure deliverability:** Pursue the right tactics to be legitimate with your email marketing campaign not to be filtered out by spam traps and ISP settings.
- ✓ **Build initial audience (segmentation) and grow subscriptions:** Focus on your strategy and develop the right audience.
- ✓ **Develop relevant content and attractive presentation:** Segment your audience to give the right message at the right time.
- ✓ **Launch and execute campaign:** Execute campaign to segmented audience through integrated marketing channels.
- ✓ **Track and optimize:** Measure analytics and calculate ROI for the campaign and keep optimizing.



Social Media

Online communities are changing the way new products are developed. Product marketing managers and product managers now use applications like LinkedIn to share useful content. Potential buyers use social sites and discussion forums to research technology products and get expert opinions.

Social media marketing is defined as any form of direct or indirect marketing that promotes a product or business through the conversations and sharing which occur on the social web. The primary purpose of social media marketing is to start conversations and promote sharing of those conversations on an on-going basis in order to indirectly promote your product in the future.

Social media marketing also helps you directly market your business. For example, you can post an invitation to a new product launch event on your LinkedIn page.

Social media marketing helps small technology companies build brand awareness, create more entry points to their content and their web site. The power of social media marketing comes from the multiplier effect of conversations and sharing.

One may not see it this way but the reality is social media sites like LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook are search engines. Twitter serves up a reported 24 billion searches per month. This, compared to the rough estimates from Bing (4.1 billion) and Yahoo (9.4 billion), is amazing. (Source: <http://searchenginewatch.com/3641326>)

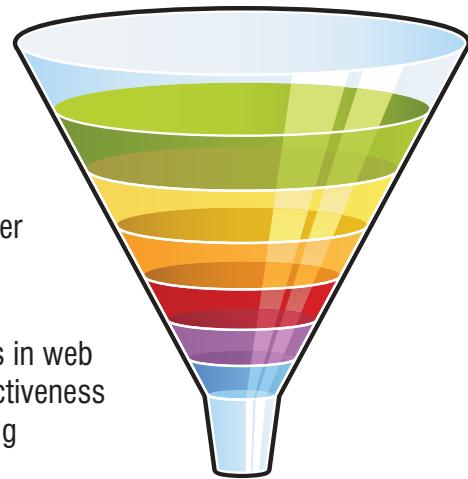
Clearly, there are synergies between social media and search marketing that can help multiply visibility and brand awareness on the internet.



Web Analytics

The difference between having and using data is analogous to the difference between having and using money. Having money is a good thing, but putting the money to work yields much higher returns. Putting web analytics to create a competitive advantage works the same way.

Internet savvy marketers invest significant money and resources in web analytics. They continually monitor, tweak and optimize the effectiveness of their web sites, content marketing programs, search marketing campaigns, and social media programs.



Who should own web analytics in your company? What methodologies should be deployed? Which tools should be used? What metrics should be tracked and analyzed?

Identifying and empowering the right person who owns web analytics is the first critical decision for success in integrated online marketing. Provided the right person is in place, he/she either knows or will learn the pros and cons of web analytics methods (outcomes, clickstream, research, and competitive analysis), how to define the metrics for each campaign, and which analytics tools to deploy.

While the above questions are important, the most important web analytics question is: How do the metrics (unique visitors, page views, bounce rate, etc.) relate to the business strategy drumbeat that your marketing team is marching to (growing market share, increasing market size, or increasing margin)?

The answer to this question starts with defining the stages of “the marketing funnel” and the key performance indicators (KPIs) at each stage. A typical funnel may have five or six stages and corresponding KPIs such as:

1. Audience – population sets eligible/available to purchase the product, Total Available Market (TAM)
2. Prospects or Contacts - # of contacts in the Marketing Automation System (MAS) or mailing list with valid contact information
3. Leads - # of marketing qualified leads in the MAS or CRM system, designated as “aware or interested” in the product
4. Opportunities - # of accounts in “Evaluation” phase with specific project, budget and timeline to buy
5. Customers – new sales (\$s, users), repeat sales, maintenance, service contracts
6. Evangelists – word of mouth (posts to blog, tweets, “shares”), individuals/accounts that are willing to be references



Developing a clear line of sight between the web analytics and the business goals is a real challenge for most companies. Two sets of new generation digital analytics solutions have emerged to address this challenge:

- 1** Integrated online and offline Marketing Intelligence tools – Tools that help visualize, aggregate, and correlate the data from different marketing channels, both online and off. Leveraging these insights can improve marketing resource allocation and ROI.
- 2** Customer lifecycle analytics – Page views, clicks and other events (such as API calls, access to third-party services, etc.) are all tied to an individual visitor instead of being stored as separate data points. Connecting all the data points into a marketing funnel can offer additional insights into visitor behavior and website optimization.



Keys to Success

- Integrate your content marketing, web site, search marketing, email marketing, and social media marketing activities.
- Leverage the power of online marketing to amplify the value of traditional off-line marketing.
- Create and update relevant and informational content to increase awareness with prospect, build authority and trust with qualified leads, maintain loyalty with your customers.
- Put your website in the core of your marketing strategy.
- Do your homework with keyword research and competitive traffic analysis.
- Learn how search engines work and increase search engine visibility.
- Create and maintain personal communications with customers and prospects using email marketing while cross-leveraging all other internet marketing tools.
- Create more entry points to your web site and content using social media and e-newsletters.
- Use paid search advertising and vertical search engines – they work.
- Define the stages of “the marketing funnel” and the key performance indicators (KPIs) at each stage.
- Measure the performance of each and every program and campaign religiously – web analytics every month, every day, every hour.
- Develop a clear line of sight between the web analytics metrics and the business goals.



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