



S.M.A.R.T.E.R. Marketing Plans

Top 10 Strategies to Create a Winning Marketing Plan

Introduction

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Marketing in today's digital world has many marketers scrambling to build marketing plans that not only deliver immediate results with a high ROI - but can also adapt to the changing behavior of prospects as they search for products and services online.

Prospects today have more control of how they find information about your organization (and your competitors) and how/when they engage with you. Many traditional marketing activities simply don't align with the way prospects find, search and buy products and services today.

Prospects have an unprecedented amount of options to learn about products and services at their pace...not yours.

They have detailed information about you and your competitors literally at their fingertips and keyboards.

So, how do marketers solve the challenge of this changing landscape and find ways to not only find new prospects, but more importantly, engage with those prospects?

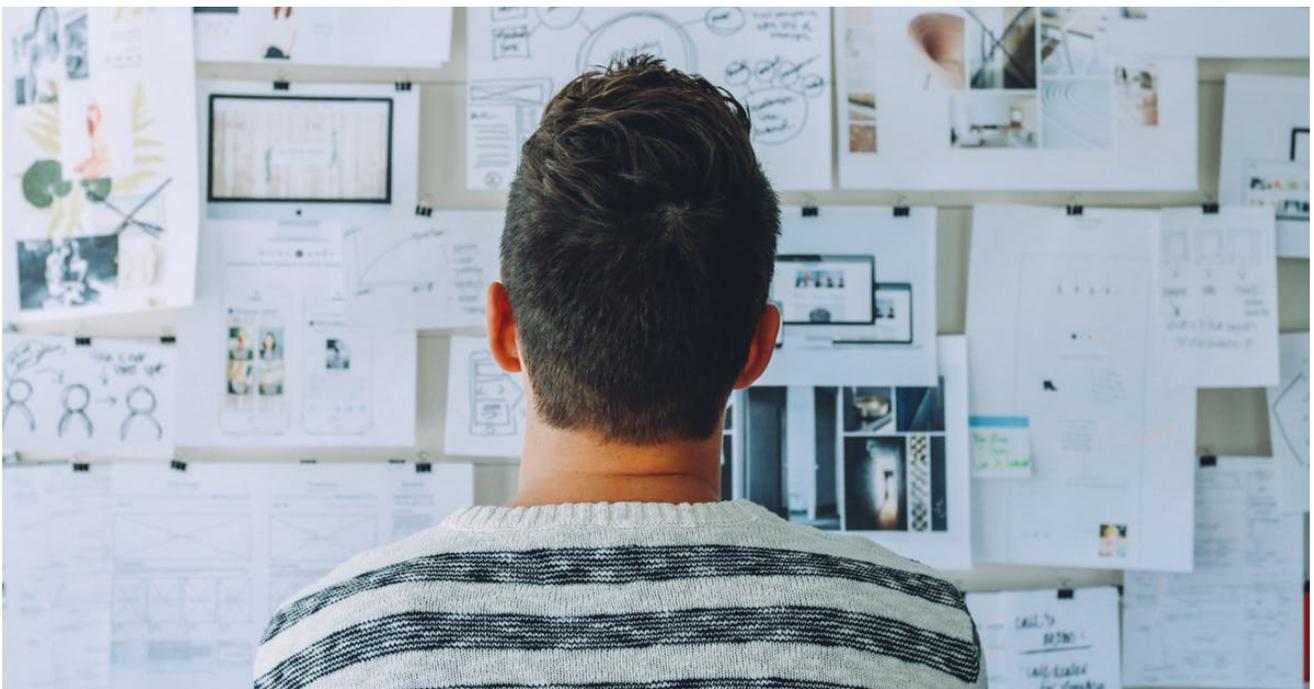
It all starts with a S.M.A.R.T.E.R marketing plan.

In this eBook we've listed our top 10 strategies to help you build a winning S.M.A.R.T.E.R Marketing plan.

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Why S.M.A.R.T. Marketing isn't good enough

Most marketers are familiar with the meaning and practice of setting S.M.A.R.T. objectives. Originally credited to be a fundamental aspect of Peter Drucker's Management by Objectives (MBO), the S.M.A.R.T process was designed to help organizations develop and align both department and company-wide goals.



Before we look at the expansion of this criteria, let's first take a quick refresher on the S.M.A.R.T process and some of the key aspects of each component:

S - Specific. Your objectives should be specific as possible, not general. They should include specific numbers, quantifiable results and set deadlines. Often specific goals will answer the five "W" questions - Who, What, When, Where, and Which. For example, it's not enough to say, "We want to increase the total number of new, qualified leads for this quarter" That's not specific.

M - Measurable. Goals and objectives need to be crystal clear to everyone. Progress can only be measured if you can clearly quantify what specific outcomes are expected. Most employees and managers actually want clear direction on whether they are achieving their objectives or not. Establishing clearly how you will measure whether the objective has been met or not will eliminate any doubts about the progress and status.

A - Achievable. Is your objective a realistic one that can be achieved given your current resources, skills, time, etc? It's critical to establish objectives that your team believes are attainable. Without their buy-in, your objective will get little traction and be almost certainly doomed for failure.

R - Relevant. While some S.M.A.R.T. models will use "Realistic" as the "R" - many believe that the factors in determining if a goal is "realistic" can be covered by the "Achievable" criteria. That makes "Relevant" a more viable part of the process as you can certainly have objectives that are specific, measurable and achievable - but if they are not relevant - then how valid is your objective? There can often be two parts to this criteria - the relevance to the "big picture" or corporate-wide goals and also the relevance to the individuals responsible for this criteria. At the individual level, relevance is defined as something the employee has influence or direct control over.

T - Timely. Specify when the objective will be accomplished. Every objective needs a deadline. Without a deadline, teams can easily lose their motivation and get trapped in dealing with the noise of their daily business. Establishing a time for your objective to be completed, will help your team stay focused on the important priorities and what goals are important.

So, that all sounds pretty straightforward, right? If we follow that process, we should be well on the path to achieving our important goals and objectives.

However...it's important to understand that Mr. Ducker's first known use of the S.M.A.R.T. criteria was in 1981. Over 25 years ago. Obviously a lot has changed in the last 25 years and especially in regards to the way prospects search for products, interact with organizations and ultimately make their final decisions.

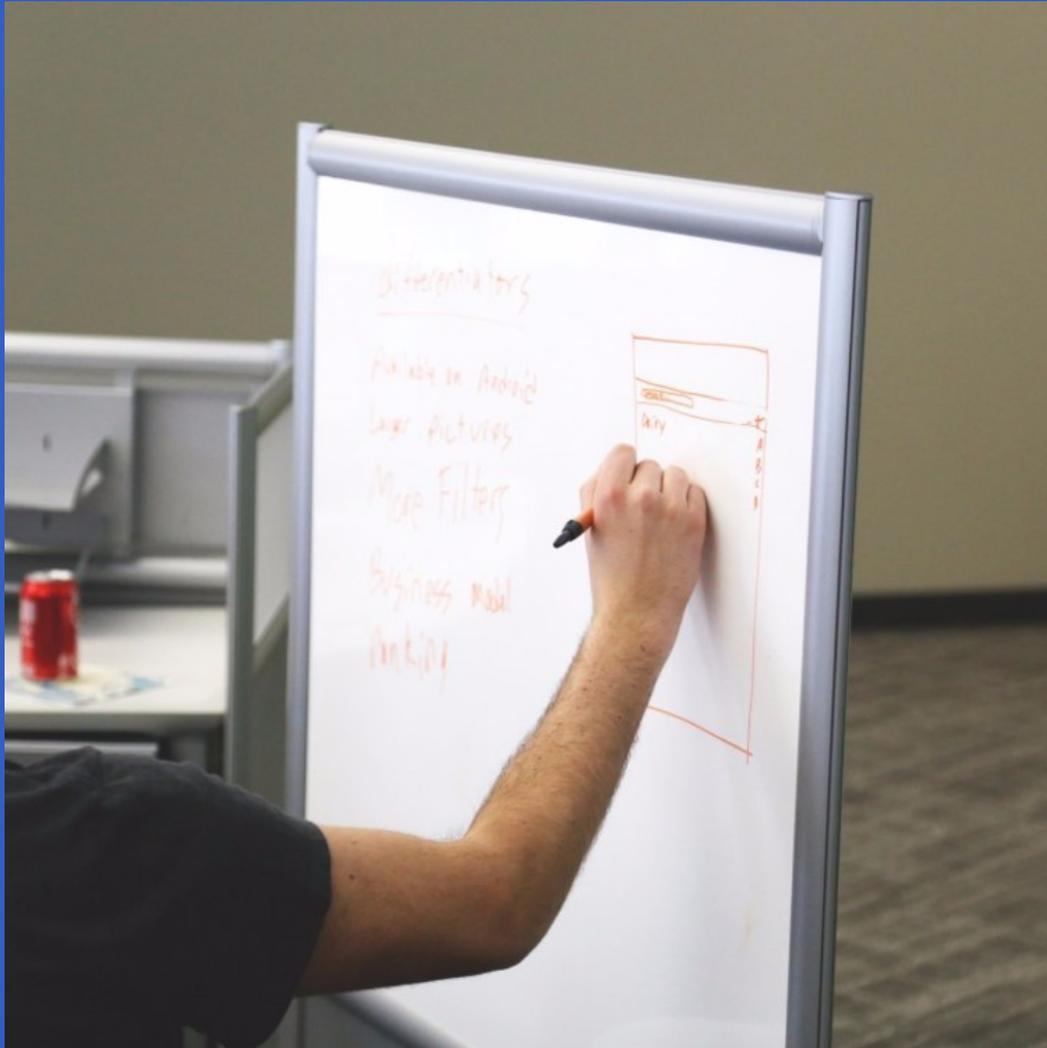
Creating a S.M.A.R.T.E.R Marketing Plan

As today's marketing landscape continues to evolve and change, marketing professionals need to actually implement a S.M.A.R.T.E.R. approach into their business and marketing process and goals. Here's the E and R:

E - Evaluate. In today's rapidly changing digital market - and especially in the fast paced world of social media, you have to *consistently and methodically evaluate* the effectiveness of each activity that is part of your marketing plan. Unfortunately many marketing plans are "set it and forget it" - and are reviewed infrequently - often quarterly at best. Your successful marketing plan depends on your team being able to quickly engage and interactive with your customers and prospects - who now require and expect on-demand communication. Without a planned evaluation process, you may miss out on important opportunities to adjust your plan and stay fully engaged with your prospects.

R- Review. Many marketers think there is an overlap between *Measurable, Evaluate and Review*. But actually, each serves a distinct part in the overall process. *Measurable* equates to putting a number to your goal. *Evaluate* looks at the effectiveness of your results. And *Review* should be a step back and a review process of all of your activities, results, measurements, etc. - and how that all fits into your overall marketing and organizational goals. Market conditions often change rapidly and without a planned review, you may be wasting precious time and resources with activities that may no longer be aligned with your goals. Similar to the Evaluate criteria, the Review process should be proactively scheduled and integrated as a standard component of your marketing process.

So there you have it - a S.M.A.R.T.E.R. marketing formula to help with your marketing and business planning. And now on to our top ten strategies...



Top 10 - S.M.A.R.T.E.R Marketing Strategies

To Create a Winning Marketing Plan

#10 Use the S.M.A.R.T.E.R. Process for Your Marketing Plans

Our first strategy involves implementing the S.M.A.R.T.E.R. process for building your marketing plan.

The S.M.A.R.T.E.R model is not just a process for business or company-wide goals. In fact, the model is a great foundation to use to help plan your entire marketing strategy, goals, objectives and your tactical activities, assuring everything within your marketing process is tightly aligned and on a path for success. The S.M.A.R.T.E.R model is a near perfect process for building a marketing plan that will deliver results and keep your marketing team focused on the important priorities.



#9 Create Trusted Content

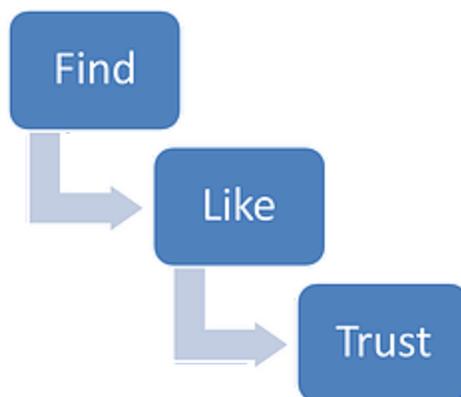
There is no hiding from the fact that more and more prospects are doing their own research today as they search for products and services. This is most often done without you even knowing the prospect may be interested in your company, product or service. They simply go online and research your organization, compare your products or services, read reviews, browse your website, visit your competitors, etc. - again most often without you knowing anything about their process.

The goal today is **engagement**.

And the best way to engage with customers is to provide them relevant and timely content based on their needs. Your content should be designed to educate, inform and ultimately...build trust. Trusted content is the key to engagement.

In other words, as prospects are researching new products and services - they need to:

- Find you (get noticed via your website, social media, etc.)
- Like you (reveal information about themselves)
- Trust you (engage with you)



Here are some basic rules of creating trusted content:

- Must be non-promotional
- Needs to be highly relevant to the prospect
- Educates or informs them (without selling them)
- Solves a problem
- Validates your expertise
- Builds trust

And finally, here are some ideas on creating content that helps build trust:

- How to articles, tips, etc.
- Testimonials
- White papers, e-books, guides, etc.
- Newsletters
- FAQ's
- Videos
- Blogs
- Case studies
- Resource/ROI tools
- Research/Reports

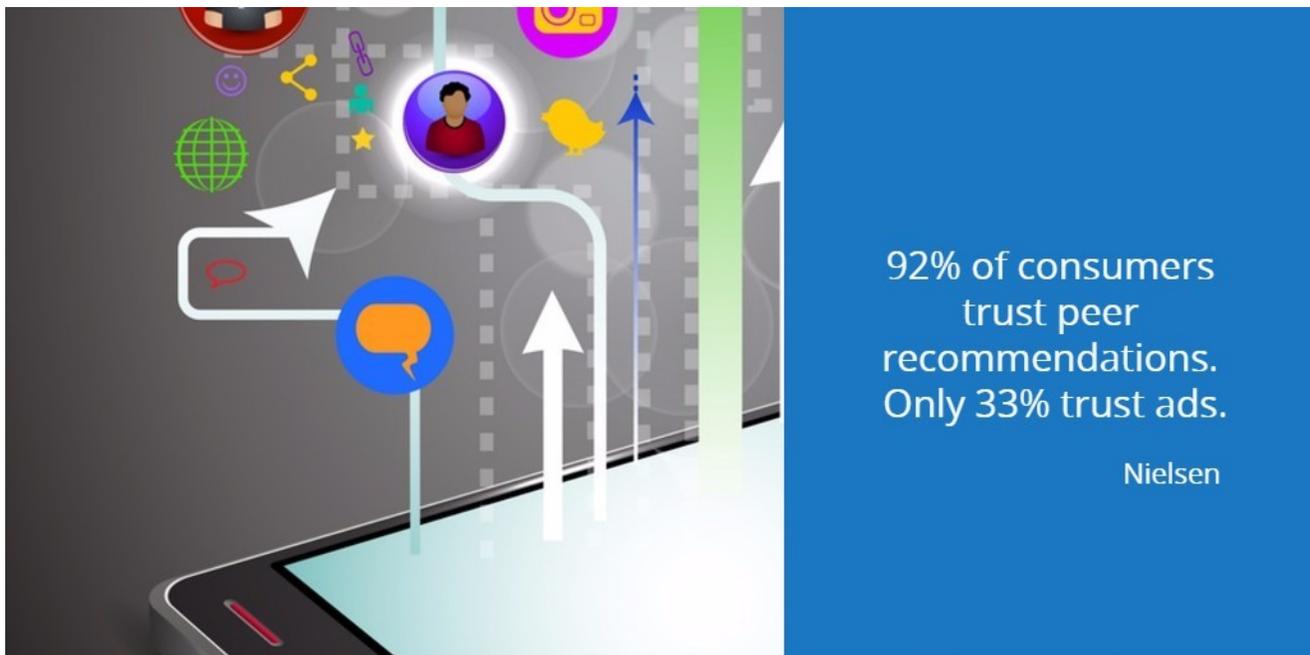
Today's prospects can spot spam and promotional content a mile away. The only way to cut through the tremendous amount of "noise" in the market is to consistently provide personalized content each prospect not only wants to receive - but content that positions you as someone they trust and want to engage with.

#8 Get Social

Much has been discussed over the last several years about the importance of great content. But if "Content is King"...then "Distribution is the Queen."

In other words - great content doesn't help much, if it doesn't get found. And the best way to make sure your content is seen by your customers and new prospects is by leveraging social media.

Social media is not a fad. Social engagement is, in essence, the new word of mouth. Combining trusted content with a smart social media plan is a major component of your successful marketing plan.



#7 Don't Treat All Prospects the Same



The days of blasting the same email message to everyone in your database is over. In fact, it's been over for a long time now.

The same can be said for lumping all prospects into the traditional cold, warm and hot categories.

Today, you need a focused, targeted messaging strategy for every prospect that visits your website that automatically delivers customized messaging based on the behavior, interaction and patterns of that prospect.

Lead management and lead nurturing strategies require multiple categories (well beyond cold, warm & hot) to separate prospects into their proper classifications to take advantage of the automated features of current CRM and Marketing Automation solutions. Many organizations find the need to create 5-10 or more classifications for the various levels and types of prospects - and even more if they classify current customers for cross-sell or up-sell opportunities.

#6 Focus on Your Customer

Most marketing professionals claim they are customer focused.

However, when pressed for details on *how* they are customer focused and *what* they do to maintain that customer focus - many unfortunately come up short.

Have you really done your research on the specific pain points of your customers and how you solve their problem like no other company can? What do they love about your product or service? What do they dislike?

Or are you making a common mistake many management teams make by *assuming* you know what your customers want?

It's critical to have a formal process for asking and listening to what your customers think about your product or service.

When was the last customer survey or focus group you conducted? Developing a real strategy that is customer focused isn't easy and you can't fake it. You simply can't build a winning marketing plan without taking the time to build a true customer focused strategy and it is an absolute requirement of any great marketing plan.

The good news is you already have the research material and information you need within your current customer base, prospects, past customers, etc. It's up to you to ask them the right questions and build a customer focused strategy that is the foundation for the rest of your marketing plan.

#5 Strategy Before Tactics

A common challenge in most companies is the tendency for management and marketing teams to jump into tactical demand marketing activities without a clear strategy or plan for *why* they are doing what they are doing.

Too many marketing teams like to chase "shiny objects" without regard for how a particular activity impacts their overall strategy or even how success will be measured.

Following the S.M.A.R.T.E.R. process will provide discipline and force you to stay true to your priorities and keep you from wasting time and energy on tactics that don't support your strategy and goals.



Many web platforms and content management systems that were adequate just a few short years ago, may not be providing you the platform you need to capitalize on your visitor's experience.

You may find your site needs a better way to handle your content strategy, or maybe your site isn't as mobile friendly as it should be.

Key Components

While there may be many reasons why you are due for a redesign, here are a few key components that should be included in a successful interactive website:

- Relevant, trusted content
- Videos
- Easy navigation to important information
- Blog section with up-to-date content
- Education/Resource Center
- Newsletter signups
- Social Links
- Testimonials
- Clear "calls to action" for next steps in engagement
- Include large images

#3 Make U/P and O/D Part of Your SOP

Want to really separate yourself from the competition?

Start by under promising and over delivering with your content and early interaction with prospects.

The old saying - "you only get one chance to make a first impression"- is certainly true with your prospects. Everyone likes getting more value, services, etc. then they were expecting. By starting your engagement by over delivering you'll not only keep your prospects moving through your pipeline, they will become a great source for referring new business to you.



#2 Leverage Marketing Automation Tools

In order to accomplish your marketing goals, maximize your ROI and stay ahead of the competition - a marketing automation solution isn't an option - it's becoming a requirement.

Why marketing automation?

The simple answer is because you can't possibly manage all the diverse aspects of digital, inbound and outbound marketing activities manually any more. There are too many touch points and too many interactions that require targeted actions and reactions to your prospects needs. Marketing automation software not only streamlines and automates the various workflows, tasks, campaigns and processes of your marketing communications - but more importantly, marketing automation software provides the highest level of enhanced communications between you and your prospects and customers.



Here are just a few of the features/benefits of a Marketing Automation solution:

Lead Scoring - allowing you to quickly identify and focus on qualified prospects most ready to convert. And take appropriate, long-term action of those leads not quite ready to convert...ultimately significantly increasing your revenue.

Lead Nurturing - providing long-term, personalized follow-up so prospects never "fall through the cracks."

ROI tracking - measure the effectiveness of your individual campaigns or landing pages.

Dynamic Forms & Web Content - change your forms and web content based on your visitors interaction and past behavior.

Visitor ID and Engagement Tracking - know who is visiting your site and what pages they are visiting.

Single Marketing Database - allowing for true visibility of your prospects and customers across your entire organization.

Email Automation - Send personalized emails based on prospects behavior.

Sales Notifications - email or text your sales team when qualified leads are ready to purchase.

A/B testing - easily test emails to see what campaigns work best.

Marketing automation provides your organization the digital marketing tools you need to easily connect with every prospect that visits your website, customize their experience and take the appropriate actions to get the results you desire.

#1 Stop searching for the “Quick Fix”

Our last strategy is good news / bad news scenario. Simply put - the bad news is there are no short cuts, no magic bullets, no quick fixes when you are trying to build a marketing plan that truly delivers sustainable results.



Unfortunately many marketing and management teams spend the majority of their time searching for a short cut - wasting time, money and resources...and ultimately falling short of their goals. Building a solid marketing plan takes a combination of hard work, discipline, and a commitment to objectively measuring your results.

The good news is we've just given you 10 strategies that will eliminate the need to search for a "quick fix". Incorporate these strategies into the process of building your marketing plan and you'll be on your way to exceeding your marketing goals!

Want To Find Out More About How to Improve Your Marketing?

Let's chat. No obligation, no high pressure sales pitch. Just a straightforward conversation to see if we can help.

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