



Digital Team
On Demand

Guide to **Digital Growth Planning**

2018

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Introduction

We doubt there is a business operating in this day and age where digital isn't at the forefront of their planning. Knowing you need to "do digital" and building the infrastructure and skill set within the business to "do it right" can often feel light years apart.

This is our guide to the steps to building a successful digital function in a growing business. Understanding your needs, making a plan, building a team with the right skills and delivering an exceptional output with results to shout about.

Identifying objectives

A successful digital team is built upon clear and measurable objectives. Knowing what you need/want to achieve as a business must lead your strategy, team structure, channels, tactics, budgets etc.

Objectives should be bespoke to your business however, common objectives we see are:

- Revenue growth (££££ or %)
- Profit growth
- Traffic growth (%)
- Customer acquisition
- Repeat purchase rate or customer lifetime value increase

Objectives should be carefully selected and focused on the most important needs for your online business. Too many and you might dilute the overall effectiveness of your strategy long term.

It's crucial to set objectives that you can track progress and report on. Knowing when you are winning or failing against objectives allows you to make quick and effective change. Make sure any objectives are **SMART**

- **Specific** – Be precise about what you are going to achieve
- **Measurable** – Quantify your objectives so you have a measure to benchmark success
- **Achievable** – Are you attempting too much?
- **Realistic** – Do you have the resources to make the objective happen?
- **Timed** – State when you will achieve the objective

Insight to inform your strategy

Once objectives are set and targets have been outlined, the next phase is to understand if those targets are achievable based on insight and data, and how you are going to get there.

What do you need to know about your business or customers to plan effectively?

This element of your digital presence is as important as delivery. If you are planning activity in the dark then much of it will be wasted on the wrong people in the wrong place.

There a great deal you should understand to plan digital effectively (this could form a novel in itself) but for starters for a growing business this is what you should have knowledge of.

USPs

Who are you as a business and what can you offer over and above anyone else? What are your core business values? Being absolutely clear about what you sell and to who provides clarity of offering & message. Building that offering and message into every element of your digital presence creates a seamless experience and will make sure you are engaging in the right way.

Your customer?

Get to know your customer, marketing should be aspirational but it also needs to be inclusive and realistic. Use your data to understand who is actually buying, this can often be very different from who the perceived customer is.

What you should know?

- Who your customer is (age, demographics, personal values, hobbies, life stage)
- Where they hangout
- What research they do before making their conversion decision
- What type of content they love
- How they want to receive it
- How they make their conversion decision
- What their key upsell triggers are
- How much they spend
- How often they come back
- What makes them loyal
- What makes them come back
- What motivates them to become a brand advocate

Knowing your customer better will help supercharge your planning and help you plan marketing activity that appeals to the right people in the right places.

High value, loyal customer

Who is she?

- 95% female
- Age 30+
- Higher earners 45k plus OR wealthy kept women
- UK based – 61% London or South East
- Young or no children
- Living with a partner or spouse

What does she think of you?

Packaging and delivery is amazing
Email communication is good
It's easy to buy
Good website and site content is interesting and engaging
She thinks you are quality, stylish and luxury

Where does she get her inspiration?

Prefers online media for inspiration

- Pinterest
- House & Garden online
- Ideal Home online

They do read blogs

- design sponge.com
- blog.lobsterandswan.com



How does she shop?

Purchasing

Mid week – In evenings after supper
Weekends – Breakfast
Mid morning coffee
Mid afternoon tea

Uses tablet / desktop to purchase
Most likely to buy homewares to replace an old item or to treat themselves
Buys homewares once a month
50% likely to buy additional items when purchasing one item

How does she shop?

Browsing

Mid week – Mid afternoon
After dinner
Weekends – Mid morning coffee
Mid afternoon tea
Evenings

Uses tablet / desktop to research

Sometimes reads catalogues and shops instore

Most likely to use Pinterest and Instagram , only 25% use Facebook

Carries out research on multiple sites online before buying, uses search engines and chats with friends when deciding on a purchase.

What does she want from you?

- She wants a brilliant service
- She wants a top quality product
- She values good customer reviews
- She loves designs she can't get elsewhere
- She would like suggestions of what products match
- She would value a catalogue

In an ideal world you are able to conduct a piece of customer insight to fully map your customers and the experience they need from you. However, we understand not all budgets will stretch as far as full insight. So first look at what data you already have that you can use to inform your strategy. You will have data at your fingertips that you can use straight away. (See Data, Data, Data for tips on the type of information you may have readily available to inform your planning)

The competition

Competitor analysis is a key component of any insight. Look at direct competitors and also look at those that appear in the SERPs (Search Engine Results Pages). They may not be a direct competitor but if they appear for your key terms, they are competing with you for traffic to your site.

- What are they doing well?
- What are they doing badly?
- What are they not doing at all?

Understanding the competitive market will enable you to identify opportunity within your sector and give yourself a point of differentiation.

It's no secret links are an important ranking factor for Google. Comparing your link profile to those same competitors will identify what is required and what is achievable in terms of increasing natural search traffic and revenue. What links do they / you have, how many and what type? Look at the types of external websites are linking to them / you. Identifying where you currently perform better, where you are outranked and areas for growth, will help determine how and where you position your content to attract editorial links.

This isn't an opportunity to copy, but to spot gaps and opportunities to do it better and outshine the competition.

Data, data, data

Use your data effectively, and objectively. There is unlimited data you can collect and store across your digital business but the danger is you drown in data or don't have the resource or skill to analyse and use it effectively.

Customer data

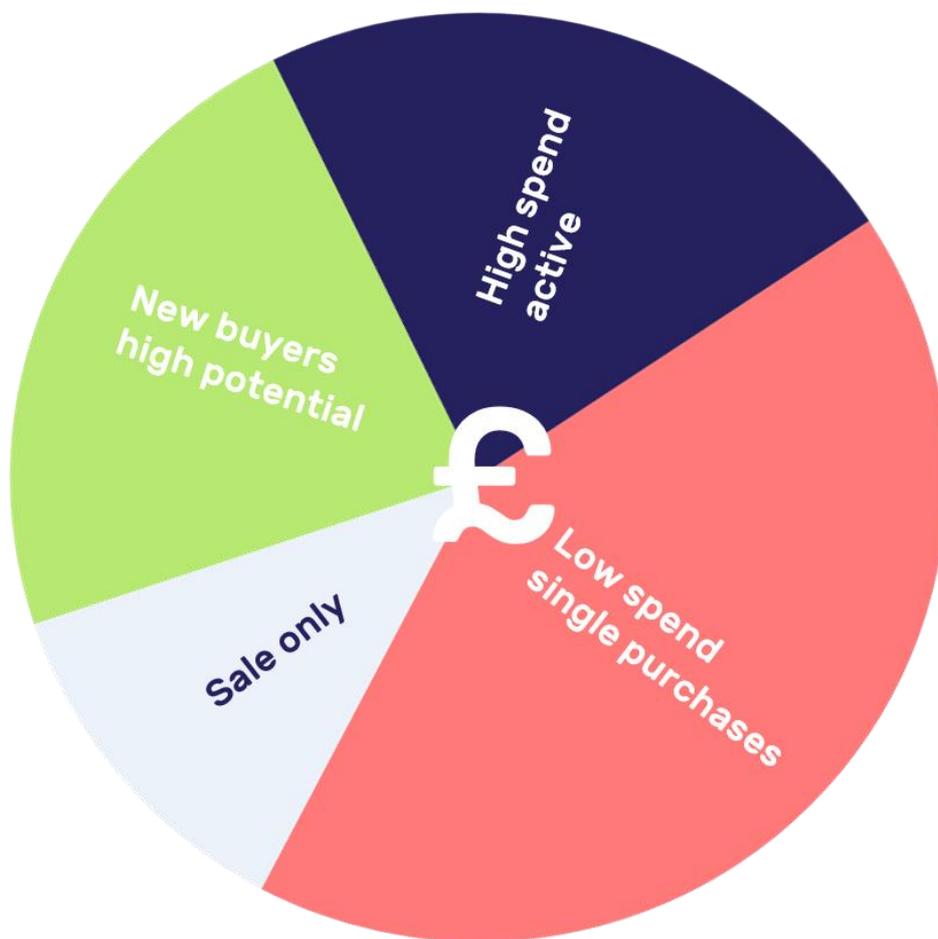
Outside of the insight previously mentioned, collecting and analysing your customer's onsite and purchase behaviour will help you prioritise your digital activity. For example, if your objective is to grow profit, then understanding your current AOV and working out how to raise that without having to acquire additional customers can give an immediate boost to your profit line.

- Return vs New Visitors
- Number of purchases
- Average order value
- Repeat purchase rate
- Recency of order
- Frequency of order
- Lifetime value
- Active shopping hours/days
- Length of consideration

Much of the above you can get from analytics but if you don't already, consider investing in a data partner to get your customer data in good shape. Build a centralised, single view across all channels, no silos or duplication of databases!

Segment your data and get to know your customer beyond their conversion:

- Who are your most profitable customers?
- Who has the most potential?
- Who hasn't bought from you in ages?



Having useful pots of customers allows you to target more effectively at the type of people who will help you achieve your goals the quickest.

Current marketing insights

A review of your current marketing activity must play a part in mapping your activity moving forward.

- What has worked?
- What hasn't?
- Which activity is driving the most traffic?
- Which is driving the most revenue?
- Which is providing the best return on investment?

Google analytics is your BFF!

With so much historic data being available on how people interact with your website, it's time to roll your sleeves up and get in the weeds of it. Areas of focus should include:

- Existing paid, natural, direct and social search traffic and revenue
- Current search engine visibility
- Key search engine result pages (SERPs)
- Search term volume and trends
- Content
 - Top categories and pages
 - Categories and pages not performing
- Conversion rates
- How your site performs in comparison to others in your sector
- Email
- Social media

Look beyond last click. All activity needs to be driving a return, which is a no brainer. However all channels are not equal when it comes to ROI. All too often activity gets canned if it is in a silo and cannot hold its own in the ROI stakes. Don't underestimate the halo effect of activity, ensure your analysis looks deeper at metrics such as assisted conversions, brand and non-brand impressions, new visitor's vs returning, engagement etc.

Seasonal trends and search volumes

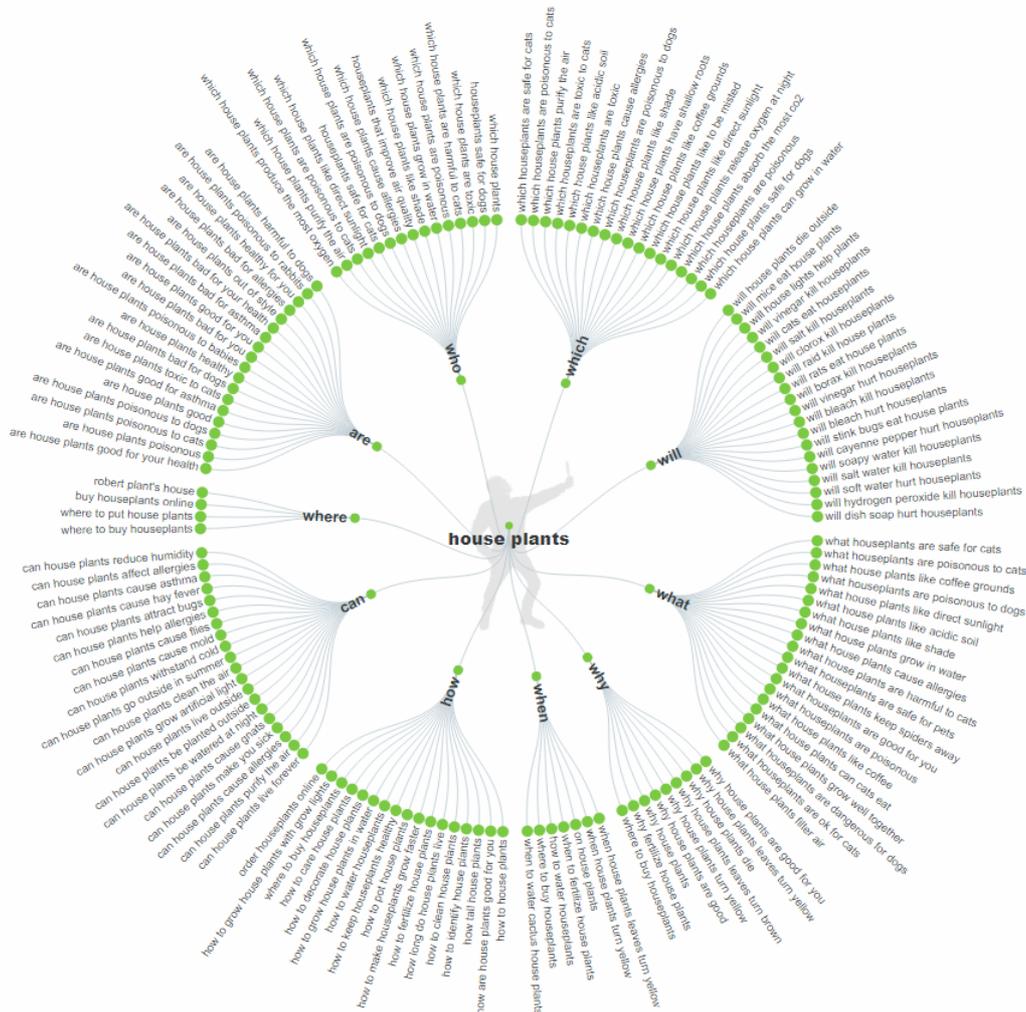
Do you have seasonality to consider? [Google trends](#) will help you identify peaks in key search terms. A planned approach well before peak season will influence the channels and tactics required. Think about how your content strategy needs to differ to catch the early researchers versus the active buyers. Use [Google's Keyword Planner](#) to review search volumes for key terms. Be realistic, appearing number 1 for high volume generic terms may boost your ego but may cost a pretty penny, will those customers actually convert and is it worth the spend?

“Don't underestimate the halo effect of activity, ensure your analysis looks deeper into the metrics”

Content

How effective is your content? Reviewing what content is popular, generating landings, or ranking well, what content has acquired links into your website? What content isn't performing and needs to be reviewed? Do you have key pages that could be repurposed, combined or removed to improve performance? Make sure key pages aren't competing with each other or splitting equity due to duplication, review what pages you have ranking to ensure the most important page is ranking.

As well as understanding what you are doing well, assess what content is popular or trending and what content you might be missing. Tools such as [Answer the Public](#) can help guide you on the type of questions people are asking relating to your business, product or service.



Conversion rates

This is well known for being the least sexy metric but can often be one of the most important, so how does yours stack up? In this instance bigger is definitely better! Your marketing can be doing a great job of driving people to the site but if bad experience or usability issues get in the way of that customer converting it will all be in vain.

Benchmark your conversion rates against similar business in your sector, improvements in conversion rates makes more of the hard work you're already investing.

Email performance

Your email programme should be bringing new customers into your marketing funnel, converting new visitors, enticing customers back with inspirational and informative content. Review how effectively your email is encouraging repeat visits, conversions and driving people through to content on your site.

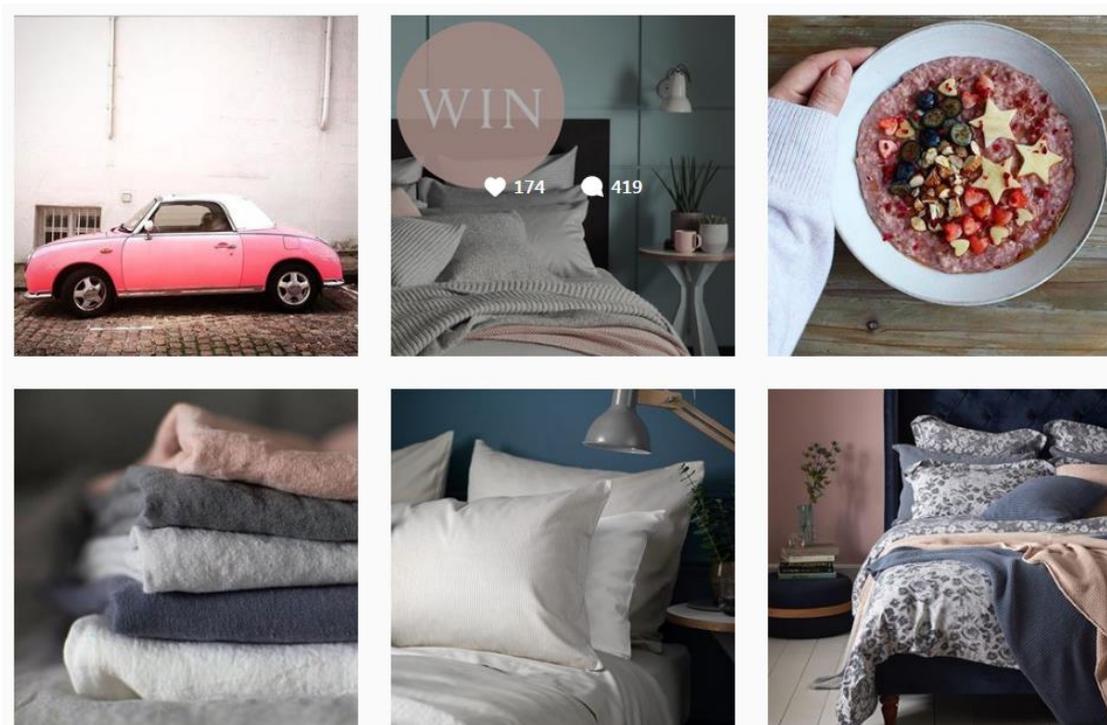
Look at:

- Subscribe rates
- Unsubscribe rates
- List growth
- Open rates
- Click through rates
- Conversions

Social media insights

Bigger isn't always better when it comes to social. So make sure you look at engagement as well as follower numbers. 100k followers may look impressive but if they're not engaging with you it's just a number. Understand how many followers are engaging with you and what that look like as a percentage. How do you compare to the competition?

Social won't always be driving direct sales on your site BUT measuring the growth in traffic from social platforms and seeing if they have assisted conversions on your site will help you to understand its performance and potential to you as a business

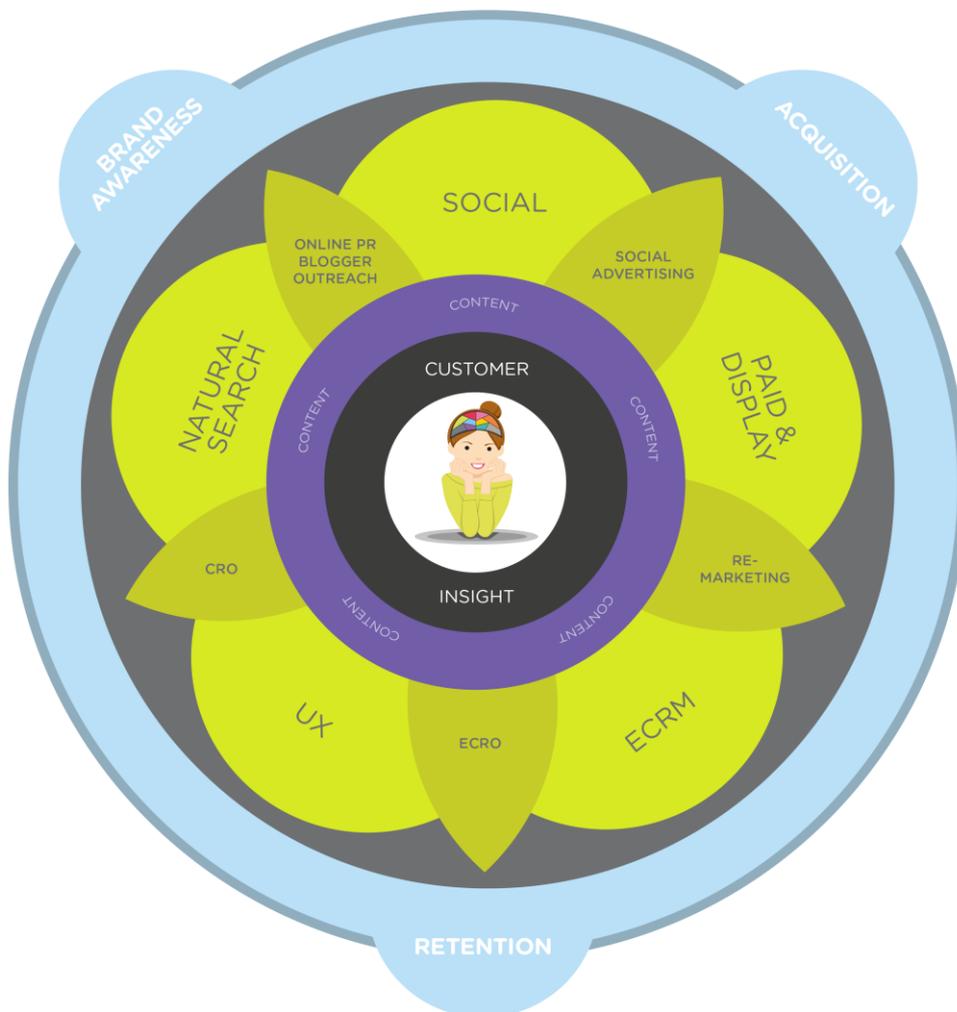


“Bigger isn't always better when it comes to social”

Defining the strategy to achieve your objectives

Now you have got to know your customer better, understood as much as possible about how they are currently buying from you and what your competition is doing, overlay these insights to your objectives. This will help you identify how to structure your strategy, plan your budget and resource in these key areas:

- Acquisition
- Retention
- Engagement
- Advocacy



The above is a representation of how different marketing tactics should work together to amplify content with customer insight at the heart of everything.

If for example you have an objective of revenue growth and plenty of customers but the repeat rate is low, immediate focus could be on incentivising repeat purchase.

If you have a small but very engaged customer base and have an objective of customer acquisition, immediate focus could be on how to get those customers to become advocates to help you gain more just like them.

Although there is no magic formula for an effective strategy (it takes a lot of insight and thought!) we have tried to simplify things with the following structure.

$$\frac{\text{CUSTOMER + (RIGHT ACTIVITY X BUDGET)}}{\text{COMPETITION}} = \text{OBJECTIVES}$$

Channels, tactics and resource requirements

The temptation is to try and do everything, be everywhere and use all channels and tactics. Use customer insight and data to identify where your customers are actually spending their time and getting their inspiration and turn that into action. Invest your budget wisely. Do less but do it brilliantly.

Your marketing team should own acquisition, retention, engagement and advocacy (across offline & digital). So create a plan that reflects this and unify all departments. Structure your plan by objective, channel and tactic. Plan top level monthly with a view to breaking down that activity into weekly deliverables. Break down each part of the strategy channel by channel, tactic by tactic.

**“Invest your budget wisely.
Do less but do it brilliantly”**

Activity

Week no		22	23	24
Date		Feb 26th	Mar 5th	Mar 12th
Long Term		Product 1 Product 2 Product 3		
Key Moments	Key dates		Mothers Day	
	New product drops	New product launching		
PR	Key features		Interview with owner - Sunday newspaper supplement	
	Events			Product launch event London
	Press mailings			
Content Theme		Brand collaboration #STYLEMESPRING Hot competition		
Onsite	Page optimisation	Work through site page by page to improve content optimisation based on ST		
		New product banner		New Site going live on 13th!
	Tech SEO			
	CRO			

Mapping out activity required across the key stages of the buying cycle and relevant tactics should start to make clear the type of skills and technology that would be required to deliver your plan.

The next step is to understand your resource by mapping how long it should take to deliver each activity in the plan. Always be realistic and plan for contingency time.

Campaign Planner					
Business Objectives					
Weeks	Month 1 August	Month 2 September	Month 3 October	Month 4 November	Month 5 December
Link building/online PR (New season launching)	Autumn/winter product launch Press release Press/blogger event		Soiree - Autumn/winter Press release Press/blogger event		
Hours	20	15	20	15	
Link building/online PR (Seasonal)			Christmas Press release Blogger outreach		
Hours			10	15	
Link building/online PR (Product range 1)		Product Blogger outreach event			
Hours		10	10	10	
Link building/online PR (Product range 2)		Product Data collection, news story and seedable content creation			
Hours		10	10	10	

This should give you a complete overview of what you need to deliver.

Your next activity is to work out where the skills and resource gaps are in your current team.

Internal skills & technology gap analysis

Matching internal skills with the strategy is going to be key to the success of your project. There is no jack of all trades when it comes to effective digital delivery. So make sure you pick the best person for the jobs in hand and outsource/ up skill where required.

Profile each role in the plan and identify the core skills needed and map every skill needed for each type of activity:

“There is no jack of all trades when it comes to effective digital delivery”

Example 1

Skills & Expertise: Offsite – link building / online PR

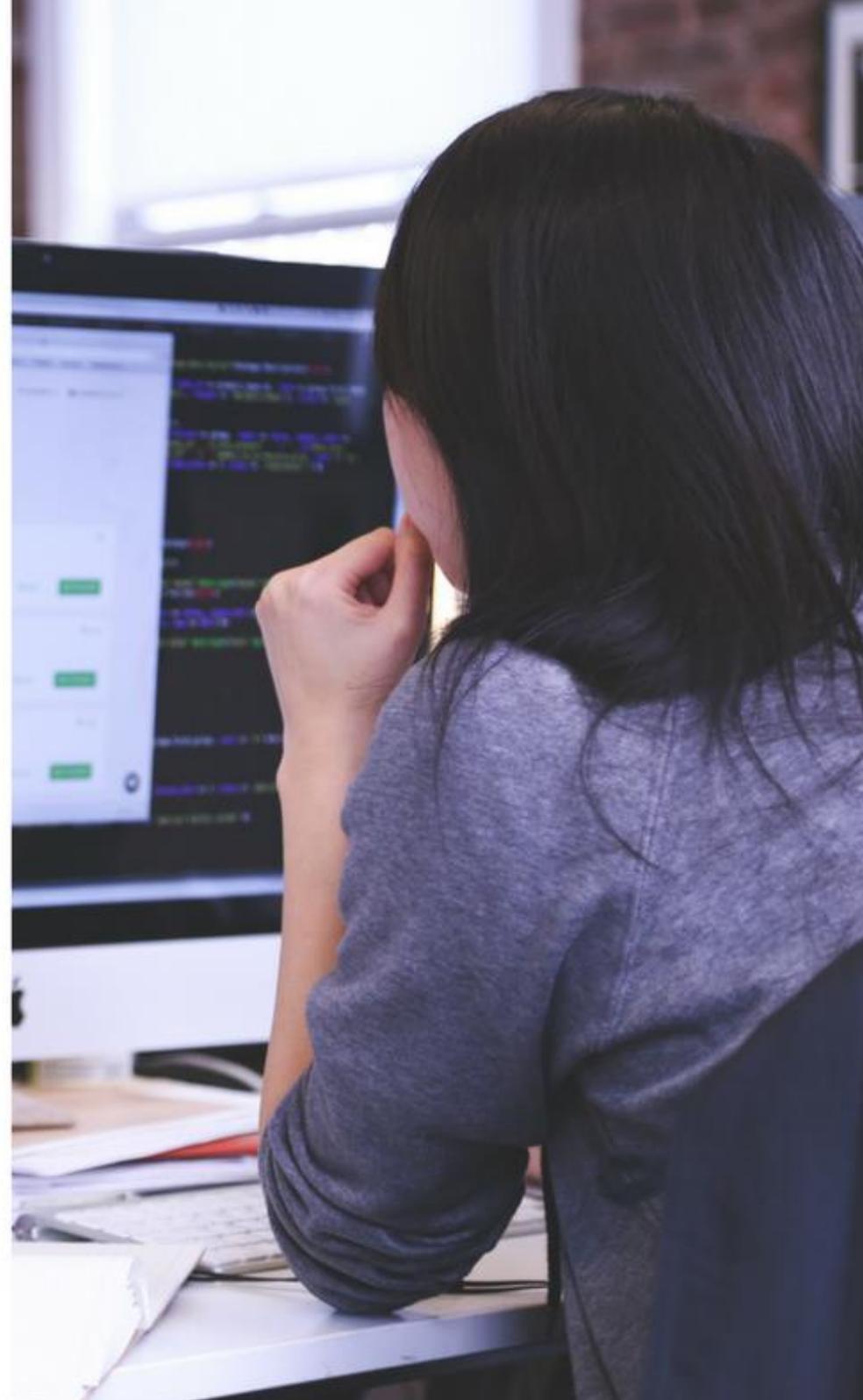
- Copywriting
- Editorial link building
- Media budget management
- Digital PR & content creation
- Rapport & relationship builder
- A journalistic attention to detail
- Customer insight, survey & polls
- Blogger engagement, sourcing, assessing SEO value, liaison
- Ability to turn creative ideas into commercially viable action plans
- Reporting on activity and its impact according to agreed targets and KPIs
- Understanding of search marketing & keeping up to date with industry news



Example 2

Skills & Expertise: Onsite – Technical and testing

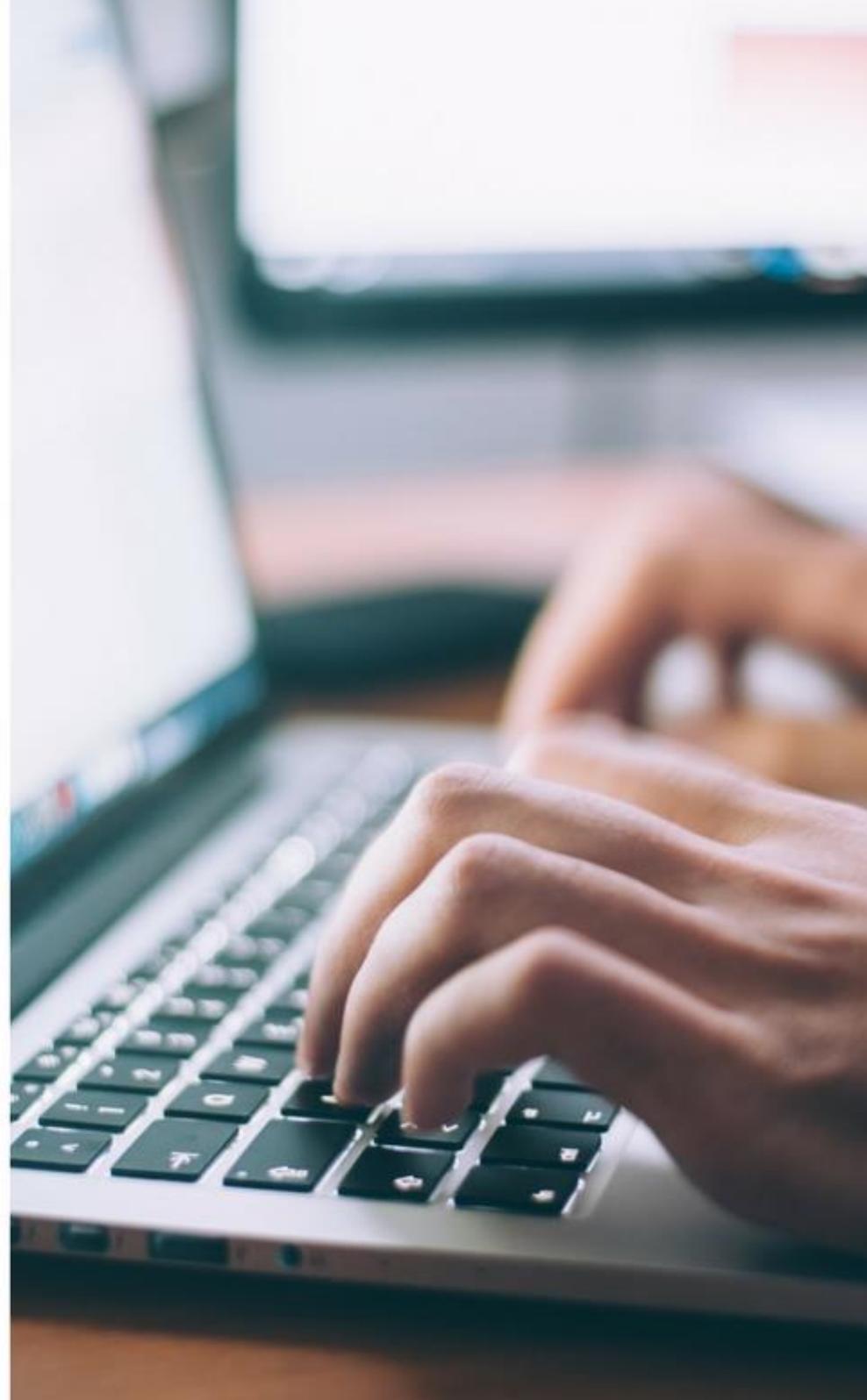
- Site architecture
- Search term analysis
- Natural search strategy
- Usability consultancy / audits and conversion testing
- Understanding of complementary marketing tactics
- Knowledge of advanced ecommerce functionality and platforms
- On-site optimisation (meta, rel, alt, video, audio & PDF tags)
- Interrogating data to report against KPI's
- Knowledge of HTML, XML, W3C, JavaScript and web servers
- Understanding of search engine algorithms and abreast of latest developments



Example 3

Skills & Expertise: Onsite – Technical and testing

- Optimizely
- Various Chrome plugins
- Google Webmaster tools
- Google content experiments
- Google AdWords keyword tools
- Moz and Open Site Explorer
- Microsoft IIS Tools Kit, Deep Crawl and Screaming Frog



Use these profiles to identify where additional internal/ external support and tools may be required.

Current resource, mapped against skills, should give a clear defined picture of what you have, what you need, and whether this can be achieved internally with training or if additional external support is required.

Insource vs outsource vs up skill

Your gap analysis helps you understand where the business needs additional support. Identifying what that support looks like will be key to manage budget and resource effectively.

Insource

Building an effective team can mean new full time employees, evaluate if this is really the best requirement for the business and be honest about the type of skill set needed. The digital mix requires completely different mind-set's for different activities, so if you are looking for one size fits all employee think again.

Lack of resource is an all too common problem, the team have more to do than they have hours in the day. Understanding and mapping the resource gap will help you make the decision between new team members on a permanent basis or the potential to build in outsourced support.

In sourcing can be a slow process, with notice periods for senior roles between 3-6 months. Map potential recruitment against timelines for achieving your objectives and build in the time expenses for those required to run the recruitment process.

Outsource

Outsourced support can mean many things, finding and employing a freelancer, hiring an agency, or the inclusion of flexible experts working as part of your in house team. Costs, effort and benefits will vary, so making the decision on the right level of support for your business could have a huge impact on how effectively this is delivered.

Freelancer support - finding the right freelancer for your business can be time and cost effective. A successful freelance relationship will be dependent on the level of skill you have in house to recruit and manage the right person for you. It can be hard to find the right people with the right skills that can blend with your team.

Agency support - this can be a comprehensive way to manage your digital strategy. However do consider if this is a hammer to crack a nut, referring back to your resource and skills gap analysis will determine if fully outsourcing is the right thing for your business and your budget.

Flexible in-house support - the change in the market has seen an increased demand for flexible in house support. Businesses such as [Digital Team on Demand](#) can provide skills matched experts into your business on a flexible and on demand basis.

Upskill

Do you have enough resource but the output from the team could be improved? Upskilling current staff is a highly cost effective way of making more from what you have. Coaching, mentoring and training is an effective use of time and budget if you have resource.

Know your limits

Hiring digital professionals can feel like a mine field, especially if you're not a digital expert yourself. Consider the support of those with digital expertise in helping you source the right digital professionals to build your team. This doesn't have to be a recruitment agency with high cost fees. Make use of experienced networks and businesses specialising in flexible digital support for in house teams.

“Upskilling current staff is a highly cost effective way of making more from what you have”

Owning delivery

Having invested in building your team, management and ownership of delivery has to be carefully planned and run to ensure effective, cohesive, results driven activity.

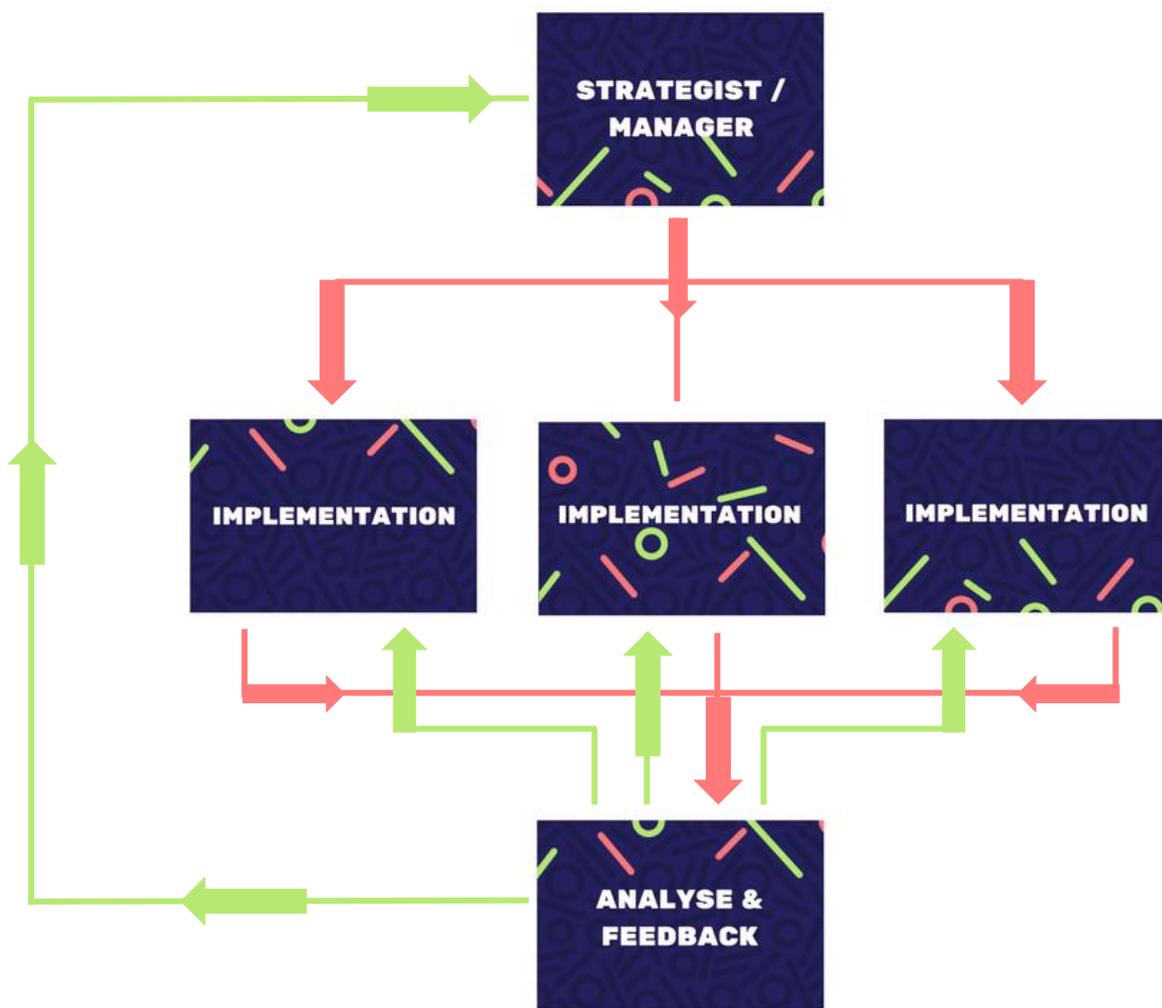
Unity

Unify your team, set collaborative goals and clear lines of ownership. Digital disciplines established in silos SEO, social media, affiliates and PR will not work to deliver a great experience for your customers.

Your marketing team should own acquisition, retention, engagement and advocacy. Bringing together harmony between departments is the only way to do this successfully. KPIs must be centralised and teams working collectively to the same goal. This helps minimise waste, maximise efficiency and create a unified customer experience.

Assign an owner

You need a strategist that can see the bigger picture of what a customer wants and have the ability to develop quick solutions to provide it. Overseeing and managing all aspects of the delivery of your plan, your strategist needs to be adaptable and nimble, with flexibility in approach to planning.



An Agile approach

An Agile approach to campaign planning and delivery enables you to have a mind-set of exploration, creativity and curiosity. Fostering greater future focused analysis, opportunity spotting, adaptable plans (that can move at the speed at which the digital landscape changes) allows you to overcome any barriers and blockers to hitting targets in a proactive and flexible way.

Your strategy should be prioritised and timelines defined at a top level, monthly. Now break deliverables down into detailed weekly tasks. Planning effectively at a weekly level ensures cohesion between departments, timely delivery of assets that are time specific or have dependencies later on in the plan.

At any given time your whole team need to have access to exactly where we you are against activity and targets. Make sure your planner is a 'living' document that is managed and updated throughout each week. Using something like [Google docs](#) ensure you have one file that can be updated by the team, stored centrally and no version control nightmares!

Running your team

Monday motivation

Meet weekly at the start of the week with the whole team, go through the planner and discuss successes, opportunities, challenges and blockers. Build solutions into your planner around those opportunities and challenges. This is your time to inspire, motivate and get pumped up for the coming week.

Be careful not to let these meetings become a time drain, have a clear agenda and set time for the meeting to start and finish. Break into sub groups after the meeting for deeper discussions on issues that don't require the full team

Knowledge share

Keeping ahead of the curve and the competition, it's vital to be on top of the latest innovations and trends. Make part of your weekly team meetings knowledge sharing. What are the innovations in technology that could support your business, changes in your sector or market, competitor activity that's gaining buzz, market leading tactics or campaign used in other sectors that could be relevant to try for your business. Ask each team member to come with a short piece to share and tell you why they think it's cool and relevant.

Create a library of innovation, use collective bookmarking tools such as [Diigo](#) to store and save relevant, innovative and informative articles that the team can read. The better informed your team are, the more creative their thinking will be.

Embrace change

Just because you have a plan doesn't mean you need to stick to it. Be honest, is it working, are you seeing results, are the team delivering what they need to for it to be successful? An agile approach gives you scope to make measured change, test the impact, develop your future activity and then start the cycle again.

Keep a watchful eye on targets and discuss performance in your weekly meeting. What can be done to accelerate performance or to make up lost ground?

Keep in mind if it's broken DO go and fix it. Not all tests will be successful, be honest and objective in your analysis of what activity is achieving and have clear measures of what success looks like.

Monthly planning

Your overall strategy is defined, building on that with monthly planning sessions to breakdown the bigger tasks, create weekly plans and timelines. Use these session to also take a deep look at the impact of the current activity. The last week of the month, planning for the next month, is a great time for these sessions. You can effectively plan for any slippage and ensure the team are fully prepped on activity for the next month before it starts.

Internal and external comms

Tools such as [Slack](#) are great to keep open dialogue, share information, keep conversations relevant and in one location.

Choosing to communicate in an open platform creates a forum for keeping and being informed, prevents files and information being stored in multiple places such as email, Dropbox, on a laptop / desktop.

It gives your plan “owner” a full view of all activity and ensures the right information gets to the right people.

Measuring success

Real-time reporting keeps a firm eye on where you are against your target to date, giving quick and clear direction on when activity needs to change to achieve the agreed objectives.

Making use of custom dashboards within Google Analytics, build a reporting dashboard that focuses on the important metrics for your business.

Have a target tracker of the KPIs that have been agreed as part of your planning. Ideally this should be linked using APIs into Google analytics and auto refreshes so you always have current up to date information.

Remember all activity needs to be driving a return however all channels are not equal when it comes to ROI. All too often activity gets canned if it is in a silo and cannot hold its own in the ROI stakes. So don't forget the halo effect of activity, ensure your reporting looks deeper at metrics such as assisted sales, brand and non-brand impressions, new visitors vs returning, engagement etc.

**“Keep in mind if it's broken
DO go and fix it.”**

About Digital Team on Demand

We deliver the right digital marketing skills into any business when and how they're needed.

A team of top digital marketing consultants supported by industry experts. DTOD are the flexible and low risk solution for businesses that need to boost their digital teams for growth.

We will advise on and deliver the right digital expertise into your business to help you achieve your business goals.

Want to find out more?
Why not get in touch?

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