



# The 8 Biggest Digital Marketing Mistakes

& How to Avoid Them



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## INTRODUCTION

A top-down view of a desk with a laptop, white earbuds, black glasses, a purple pencil, and a cup of coffee.

Whether you are a seasoned digital marketer or a novice, you'll likely make mistakes—or already have—as you undertake your programs and campaigns.

This ebook will cover the eight most common digital marketing pitfalls, including those related to channel optimization, social media, metrics, and more, to help you understand how to avoid or fix them.



## **MISTAKE 1**

Not Knowing  
Your Audience



## MISTAKE 1

# Not Knowing Your Audience

Many marketers get wrapped up in the mechanics of digital marketing (e.g. how to use Google AdWords and figure out ad unit sizes), without realizing that they need to understand their target audience.

Your product marketing or brand team may have developed audience personas that you can utilize, but people who are actively spending time online may behave differently than what's reflected in those personas. Take this example: Assume you are marketing a motorcycle. People can and do use different words or phrases to describe that product when searching online.



- Motorcycle
- Road Bike
- Chrome
- Cruiser
- All of the above

As a marketer, you need to use the language that will best resonate with your audience. In all likelihood, you will use different descriptors at different times depending on the person you're targeting, their place in the buying cycle, and the language they are using. Being attuned to your audience in this way gives you credibility that sets your marketing apart from the competition.



It's up to you as a digital marketer to get to **know your audience as individuals** and determine how to connect with each of them.



## MISTAKE 1

# Not Knowing Your Audience

### Key takeaways for gaining audience insights

**Tap into outside perspectives.** Talk to customers and your sales staff to discover what prospective customers care about.

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**Verify assumptions.** Use every tool at your disposal—such as online comments and reviews—to confirm (or debunk) what you are assuming about the target audience. And remember that this is not a one-time exercise: you should validate your personas continuously.

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**Test to erase any doubts.** To confirm you are reading the signals correctly, test your targeted messaging with a select subset of your audience.





## **MISTAKE 2**

Ignoring Search  
Engine Optimization  
(SEO)

## MISTAKE 2

# Ignoring Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Whether you are a marketer tasked with paid search or social media, or a generalist, SEO is important to understand.

SEO is a framework for digital marketing: you can apply many of the rules and methodologies that help you achieve high search engine rankings to optimize your digital marketing overall. Simply put, SEO reinforces the following best practices:

✔ **Conduct user and market research.**

What is your audience seeking online, how are they using search terms, and what is their intent when using or seeing those terms?

✔ **Develop high-quality, valuable, and original content.**

This is the content that search engines are scanning for and it forms the cornerstone of effective SEO. You—and site visitors—gain an advantage when you can check off all the boxes for engaging content—high-quality, valuable and original.

✔ **Deliver a good website user experience.**

All the elements that contribute to user experience (UX) also contribute to good marketing in general:

- ▶ Provide relevant and sharable content
- ▶ Offer a user-friendly interface that makes navigation intuitive
- ▶ Ensure fast page load times
- ▶ Optimize for all browsers and devices
- ▶ Lead site visitors down optimal paths for conversion
- ▶ Properly configure analytics



### What you don't know will hurt you

Google penalizes websites that don't observe SEO best practices.



## MISTAKE 2

# Ignoring Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

### Key takeaways

**Learn the basics of SEO**, as you can apply key best practices to all areas of digital marketing.

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**Ask an agency** or someone on the development team to conduct a technical audit of your website. Key items for this audit should include site crawlability, correct canonical tagging, properly structured web page code, and mobile compatibility.

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**Create free Google and Bing Search Console accounts** for insights into potential issues with your website (like malware reports).

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**Get to know your website development team.** They'll typically be the ones actually implementing your recommendations so it's important to develop a good working relationship.



A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a dark blue button-down shirt, is sitting at a wooden desk. She has a stressed expression, with her right hand pressed against her forehead and her left hand holding a pair of black-rimmed glasses. In the foreground, the back of a white laptop and a small green plant are visible. The background is a solid blue color with faint, light-colored geometric shapes.

**MISTAKE 3**

Obsessing Over  
Being #1



## MISTAKE 3

# Obsessing Over Being #1

Whether you or an executive in your company is obsessed with appearing at the top of the search engine results, it takes a lot of work to achieve and maintain that ranking.

Moreover, you will eventually reach a point of diminishing returns: Once you hit a certain threshold, it takes lots of time, energy, and sometimes money to reach an incrementally higher plateau. There comes a time when you must decide if it's worth the investment.

### Paid search

Today, Google only offers four slots in its sidebar ads. Depending on your business and competitiveness of keyword terms, securing the top spot can be incredibly expensive. Moreover, it may not be worth it: are conversion rates high enough to justify the spend?

What is the quality score for your ads? Are headlines, ad copy, and landing pages performing well? If not, you can more cost-effectively achieve a higher ranking by tweaking those elements.

Rather than bidding for placement, bid for performance. Find your sweet spot by analyzing your data, conversion rates, click-through rates, and cost per click.

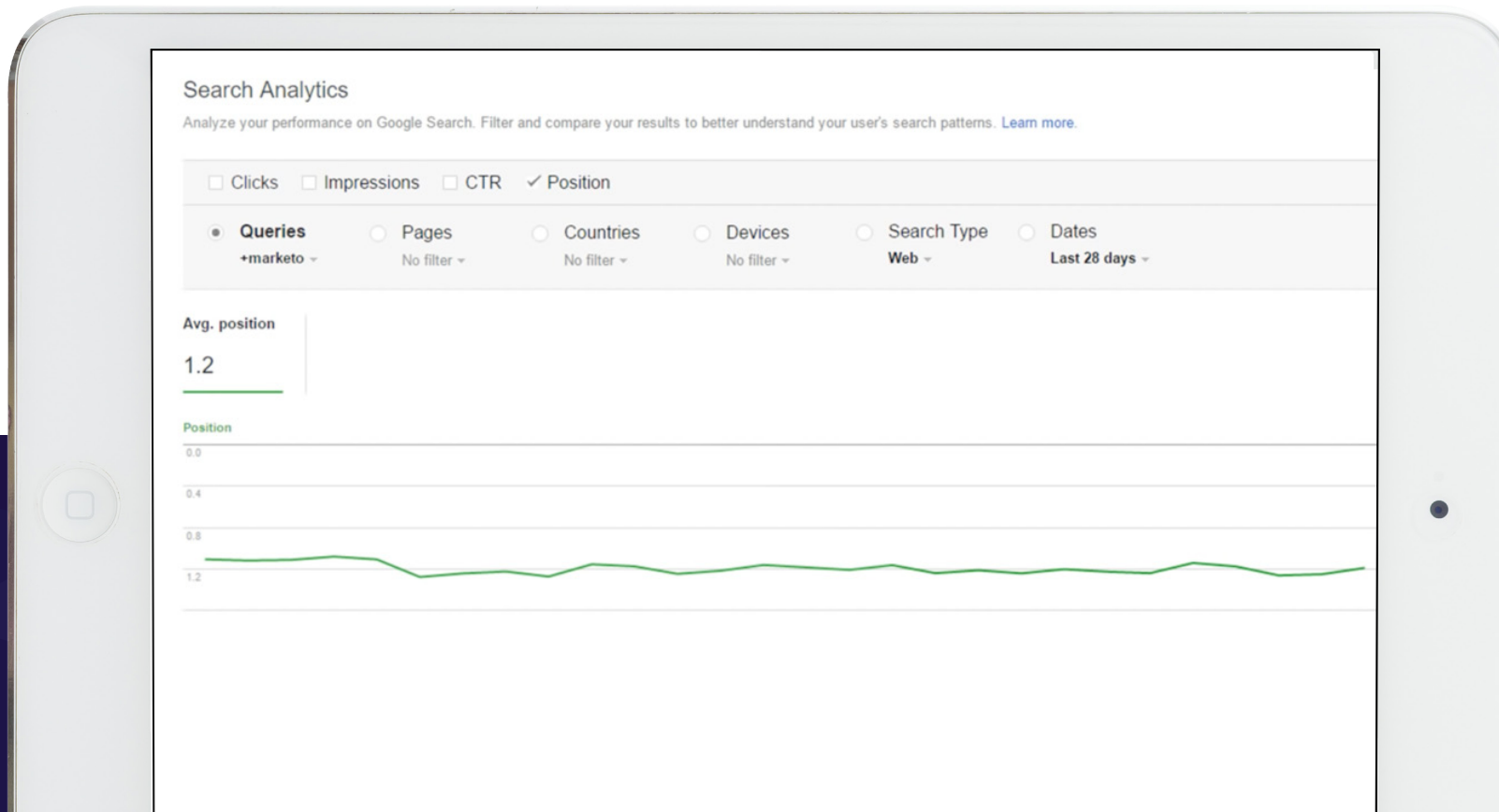
## MISTAKE 3

# Obsessing Over Being #1

## Organic Search

Organic search rankings fluctuate continually based on location, time of search, and more. But it's not worth obsessing over! Instead, look at your highest priority keyword terms and aim to land in the **top 3 or 5 positions**. And then focus on the next set of priority keywords. Only at that point should you push for incrementally higher rankings.

**This image shows Marketo's average position on Google. As you can see, our ranking shifts even for our own brand name.**





## MISTAKE 3

# Obsessing Over Being #1

### Key takeaways

**Take a step back and put your ego aside to look at the bigger picture.** In the long run, it's better to land more terms in top placements than to obsess about landing a few terms in the #1 search engine results position.

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**Use data to guide your strategy.** Look at performance metrics and align to your budget.

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**Focus on quality and relevance.** Make sure you are offering the most relevant, targeted copy, and offer to lower bid placements.

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**Optimize for performance, not position.** Focus on business value instead of bragging rights.



A woman with voluminous curly brown hair and black-rimmed glasses is looking at a silver laptop. She is wearing a red and blue plaid shirt over a white tank top and a necklace with a heart pendant. Her right hand is resting on her head. To the right of the laptop is a brown paper coffee cup with a white lid. The background is a solid blue color.

**MISTAKE 4**

No Social  
Media Strategy



## MISTAKE 4

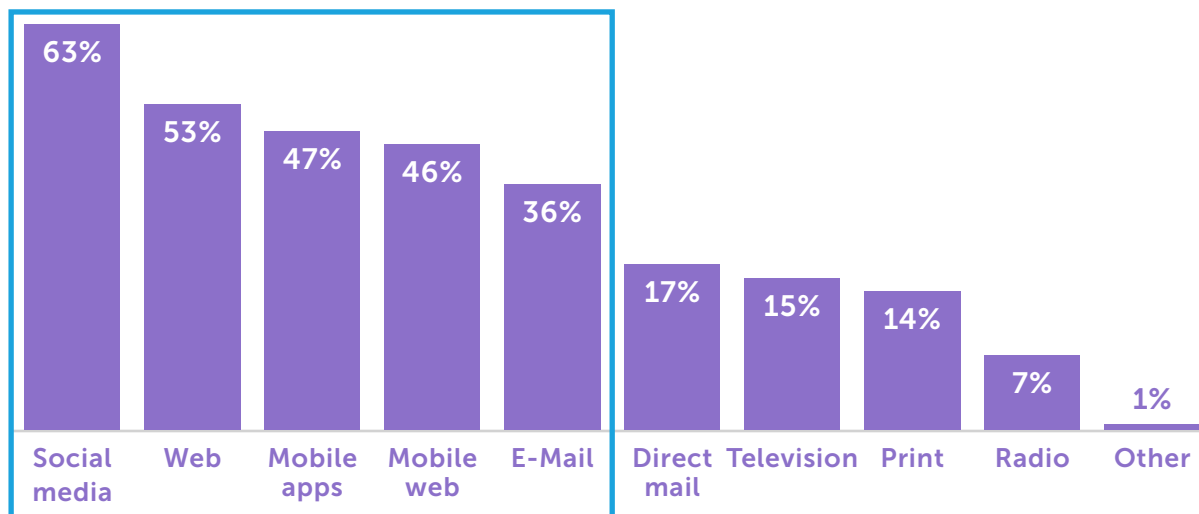
# No Social Media Strategy

Whether you opt to develop an organic social media strategy, a paid social media strategy, or a blended strategy, it's vital to include one on your checklist.

A Marketo-sponsored survey of CMOs worldwide revealed that social media is the top channel for marketing efforts going forward. Social media is not just for branding and communications—it's also an important advertising channel for digital marketing. Consider that Snapchat—which sells ad units—reached 10 billion video

views per day as of April 2016. While Snapchat may not seem relevant to your business today, remember that not that long ago, many businesses proclaimed Facebook an ineffective channel for advertising. Today, it generates significant revenues for many types of businesses. In fact, it is gaining on Google.

### Top Channels for Customers to Experience an Organization's Marketing Efforts in 2020



Source: Economist Intelligence Unit survey, 2016



Snapchat reached **10 billion video views per day** as of April 2016.

## MISTAKE 4

# No Social Media Strategy

In Q1 2016, Facebook ad revenues generated around **\$5 billion**.



This amounted to **12%** of global digital advertising revenues and a **2% rise** over the prior year.



In comparison, Google owns about **31%** of the global digital advertising market, a **2% decline** over the previous year.

Let's not forget the other options: LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest...all major communities where people spend significant time. It's a huge mistake to overlook these digital marketing opportunities.

**Just remember:** focus on quality over quantity. At Marketo, we've generated **58%** more leads via social media than paid search. However, further down the sales cycle, we see that paid search vastly outperforms social media by nearly **200%** in terms of the quality of opportunities. This makes sense, as people tend to more narrowly focus their searches as they close in on a purchase. That said, social media is a viable marketing channel due to all the activities taking place on it.





## MISTAKE 4

# No Social Media Strategy

### Key takeaways

**Don't underestimate the value of social media.**

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**Make social media a priority.**

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**Try more than one network,** but start small.

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**Be patient** as it takes time to build up a following, find your niche, develop the right voice, and see the impact of your ads.



## MISTAKE 5

Using the  
Same Tactics on  
Every Channel





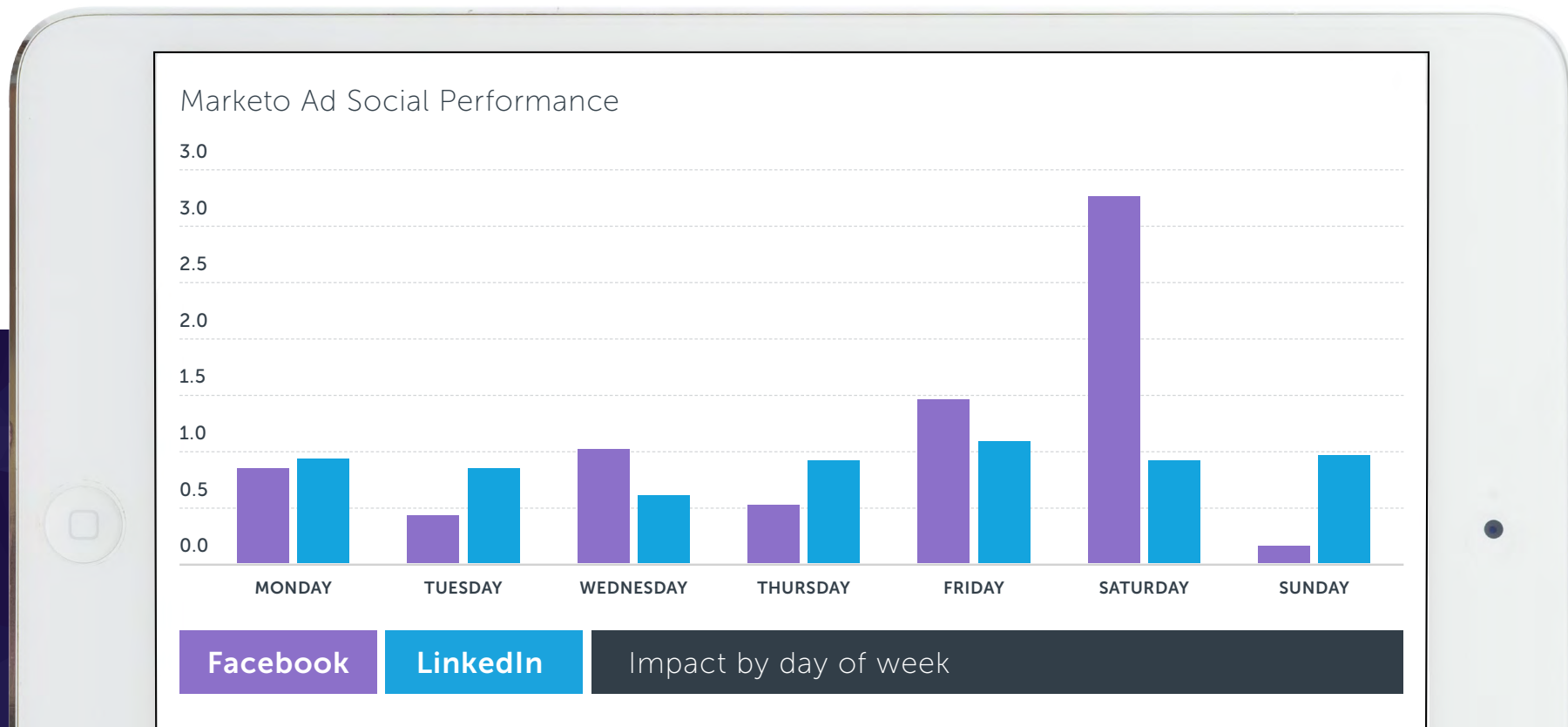
## MISTAKE 5

# Using the Same Tactics on Every Channel

Each social network is characterized by different audiences and expectations, so the digital marketing that works on one won't necessarily translate well to another. This extends to the tone you adopt, and the images, offers, and times of day you post.

You shouldn't use the same ads on paid search and social media. After all, each channel, where the target audience is in the buying process, and familiarity with your brand and products will vary. So adjust your tactics accordingly.

**As this image below shows, Marketo ads perform quite differently on Facebook and LinkedIn by day of the week.**

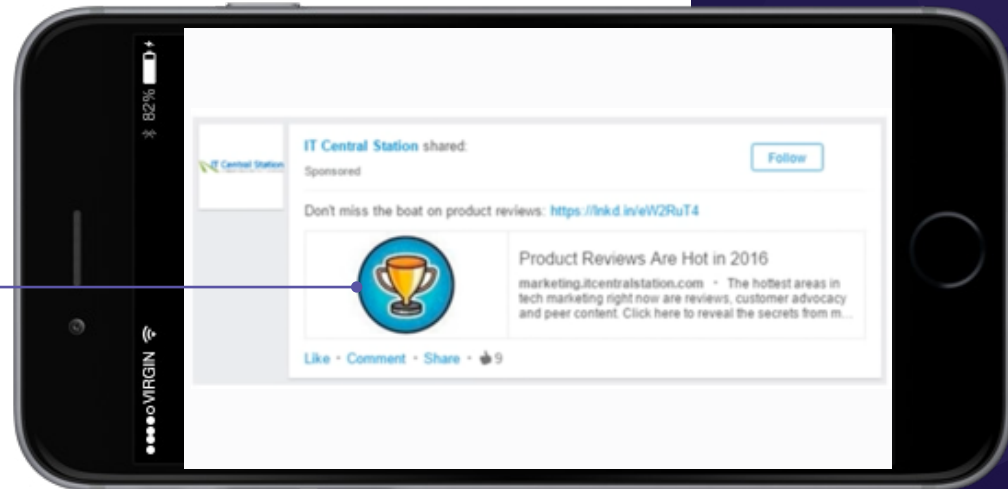


## MISTAKE 5

# Using the Same Tactics on Every Channel

Even a minor tweak can make a great difference. This sample ad on LinkedIn features an image with copy on it. The small font size of that copy leads one to believe that the image was originally created for another use and shoehorned into this LinkedIn ad.

In contrast, the simple graphic in this LinkedIn ad appears to have been chosen specifically for this ad unit and layout.





## MISTAKE 5

# Using the Same Tactics on Every Channel

### Key takeaways

**Plan for each channel individually** to optimize performance.

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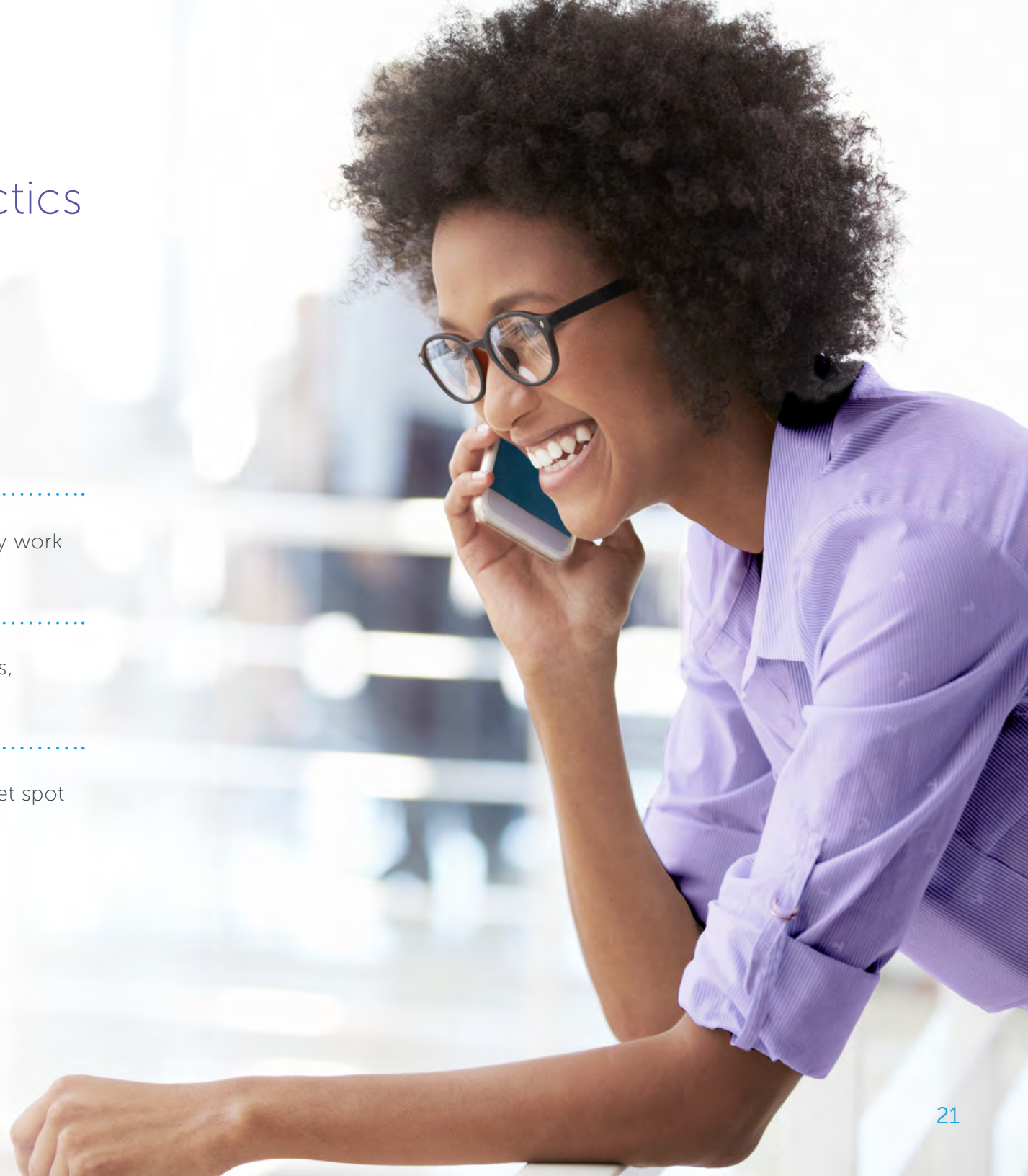
**Don't be afraid of using humor**, as it may work best in certain channels.

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**Learn from others**, including competitors, to see what is and isn't working.

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**Test various approaches** to find the sweet spot for each channel.





## **MISTAKE 6**

Focusing on the  
Wrong Metrics



## MISTAKE 6

# Focusing on the Wrong Metrics

Digital marketers can choose from a vast universe of metrics to determine their effectiveness, including the following:

- ▶ Impressions
- ▶ Cost per conversion
- ▶ Cost per mille/thousand (CPM)
- ▶ Average conversion value
- ▶ Click-through rate (CTR)
- ▶ Return on ad spend (ROAS)
- ▶ Cost per click (CPC)
- ▶ Cost per opportunity
- ▶ Conversion rate
- ▶ Cost to pipeline

But you shouldn't randomly select the metrics to track. Response to your marketing will vary based on the audience makeup and focus on each channel. With that in mind, start by determining your objective for each channel.



## Digital marketing is all about data

If you're not tracking metrics, start doing so and getting comfortable with it because it's the key to optimizing results.



## MISTAKE 6

# Focusing on the Wrong Metrics

For example, you may be focused on customer acquisition via Google, re-engagement on Facebook and Twitter, and purchase conversion in your emails. Whatever your objective, you should align your metrics to those. Only then can you determine the true effectiveness of your campaigns.

Just looking at the best—often earliest—metrics can lead you astray. Remember the previous example comparing lead volume to opportunities? If we only tracked leads at Marketo, we would think

that our social media efforts are far outperforming paid search and decide to reallocate our paid search budget to social media campaigns. But that would be a mistake since the reality is that paid search outperforms social media further down the funnel. As responsible marketers, we need to look at the whole picture.

Response to your marketing will vary based on the audience makeup and focus on each channel.



## MISTAKE 6

# Focusing on the Wrong Metrics

### Key takeaways

**Align your metrics** to each channel's objective.

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**Establish "cost-per" thresholds** rather than metrics that don't help drive the desired outcome.

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**Evaluate end-to-end performance.**

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**Optimize for quality** over quantity.

## MISTAKE 7

Not Testing Properly (or at all)





## MISTAKE 7

# Not Testing Properly (or at all)

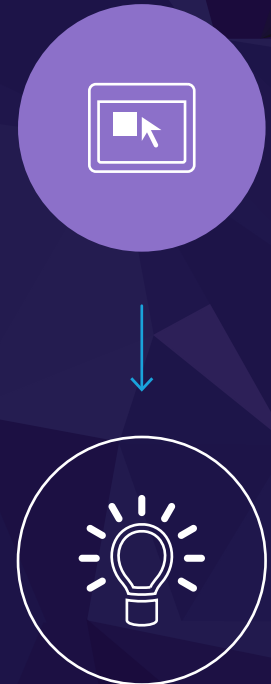
Many marketers think of testing as a luxury, but it's critical to success. It's how you optimize campaigns and ads to ensure you're not taking a shot in the dark.

### 1 Test one element at a time

When it comes time to conduct tests, you can choose from many elements, a few of which are:

- ▶ Calls-to-action
- ▶ Ad copy
- ▶ Time of day
- ▶ Landing pages
- ▶ Headlines
- ▶ Colors
- ▶ Day of week
- ▶ Tone/voice

But do not test more than one variable at a time. Otherwise, you won't know the individual declines or improvements associated with each variable. While you might feel you're moving slowly, testing one element at a time is the best approach for confidently ensuring incremental improvements.



## MISTAKE 7

# Not Testing Properly (or at all)

### 2 Ensure an effective test

Start with supporting data to formulate your hypothesis. For example, perhaps a large number of visitors check out the customer section of your website and you want to see if another page will perform better with the addition of client logos. Along with stating your hypothesis, set your goal, such as boosting click-through or conversion rate.

When it comes time to run your test, in general, you should test an element across a large volume of traffic. If you don't drive large traffic volumes, run your test long enough to gather enough meaningful data.



#### Rule of thumb for a sample size:

Test with at least 1,000 site visitors.



#### Gather enough testing data

It's never a good idea to base a decision on an insignificant amount of data.



## MISTAKE 7

# Not Testing Properly (or at all)

### Key takeaways

**Do test** because it's critical to optimization.

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**Start with a hypothesis**—don't just test for the sake of testing.

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**Test one thing at a time** to achieve clear results.

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**Gather enough data** to establish significance.







## **MISTAKE 8**

Falling Behind  
the Times

## MISTAKE 8

# Falling Behind the Times

Digital marketing seems to change almost daily, with new trends, technologies, platforms, and changes to Google algorithms and other digital marketing tools always on the horizon.

The last thing you want is to be taken by surprise. Instead, you should keep your finger on the pulse, anticipate what's around the corner, and develop a strategy to capitalize on these changes.

An example of this is the increasing importance on a website's user experience on a mobile device. If you have a great

mobile experience, you won't be missing out if Google places more importance on this factor, or penalizes sites with a poor experience. There is an entire industry built around testing and observing what helps and what hurts your website rank well in Google. Take advantage of these insights to inform your strategy.

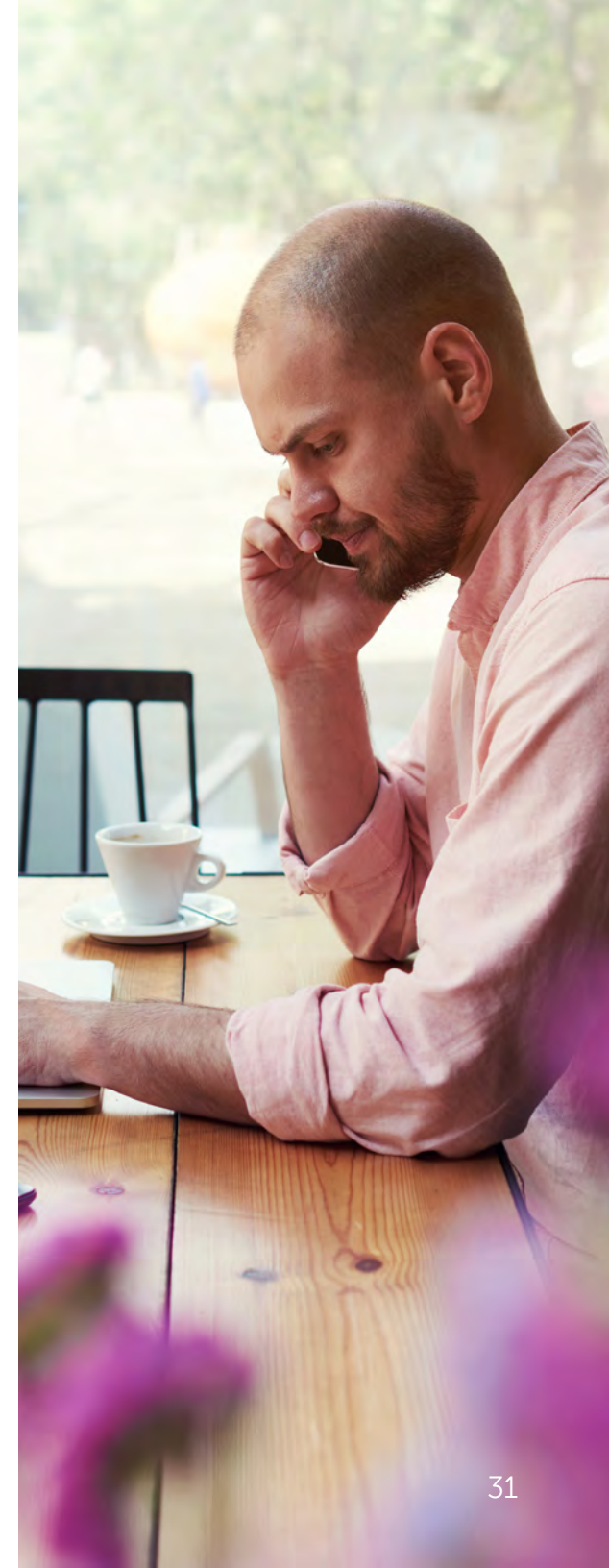
**Keep current with the latest news by making a personal and team effort to read, digest, and experiment. Here are some suggested sources to follow:**

### Industry Influencers

- ▶ [Moz blog](#)
- ▶ [TopRank](#)
- ▶ [Wordstream](#)
- ▶ [Ahrefs blog](#)

### Industry Publications

- ▶ AdAge
- ▶ Mashable
- ▶ AdWeek
- ▶ Search Engine Journal
- ▶ The Next Web
- ▶ Social Media Examiner





## MISTAKE 8

# Falling Behind the Times

### Key takeaways

**Create a reading list** of books and blogs on different areas of marketing.

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**Set up news alerts** on keywords and topics you want to track.

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**Make time to read** each morning.

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**Make it a team effort to collectively keep up with the times** so no one feels overwhelmed and everyone benefits.





## CONCLUSION

Whether you're a social media maven or a digital marketing dynamo, making mistakes is human. But the biggest mistake of all is not knowing what the biggest mistakes are so that you can avoid them.

**By following the tips outlined in this ebook, you'll be equipped to avoid major digital marketing disasters and be on the path to continue to drive successful, optimized digital marketing programs.**





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