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Marketing

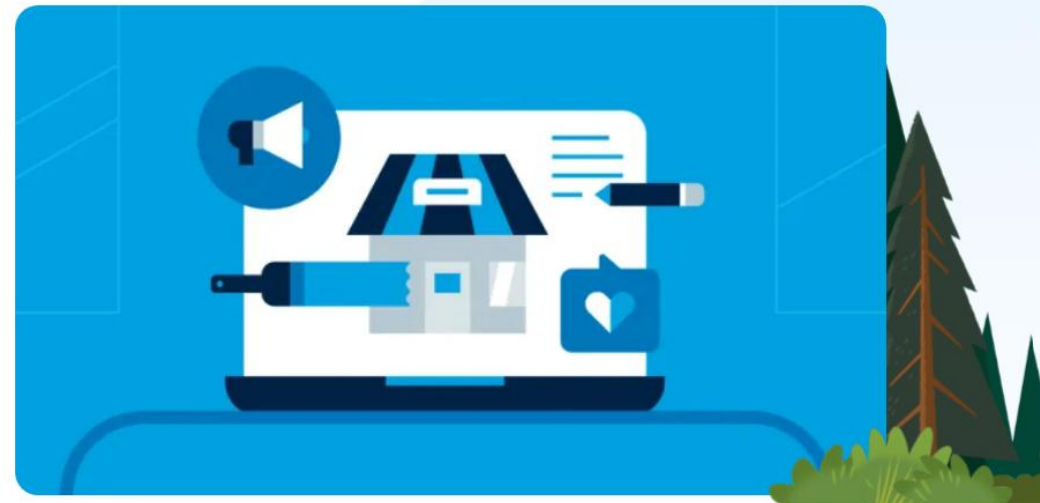
Marketing Best Practices for Ecommerce Sites

If you want to improve your online sales numbers, it's time to revisit your digital marketing strategy and embrace today's best marketing.



Jessica Bennett

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You have an ecommerce site, but are you seeing the traffic and sales you expect? Or, if you are, do you want to grow those numbers even faster?

Now is a great time to sell products online. Over 90 per cent of Canadians [use the internet](#), and after recent events made it difficult to buy at brick-and-mortar stores, 58 per cent of consumers and 80 per cent of business buyers expect to do more shopping online, according to a [report from Salesforce](#). The report also states, “Customers demand digital-first convenience and are leaning on brands to innovate like never before.”

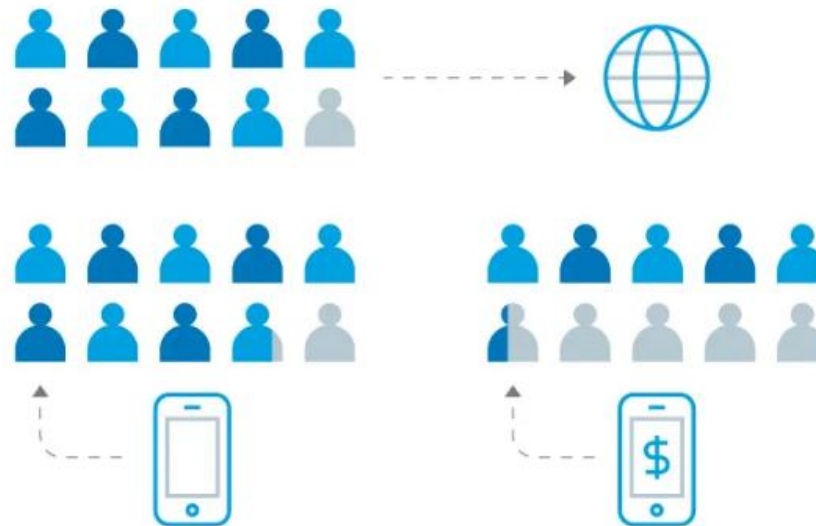
Your customers are online, and you need to reach out and find them. If you want to improve your online sales numbers, it's time to revisit your digital marketing strategy and embrace today's best marketing practices in order to grab the attention of your customers.

**It's a Great Time
to Have an
Ecommerce Website**



Over 90% of Canadians use the internet.

88% have a smartphone for personal use,
and 54% use it to make a purchase.

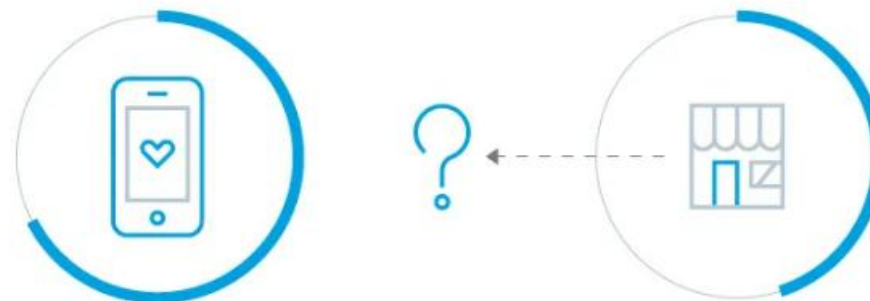


58% of consumers and 80% of business buyers expect to do more shopping online.



And 68% of customers say they're online more often than not.

However, 45% of businesses don't have a strategy for marketing to consumers online.



Begin with Your Digital Strategy

Before you start an entire website redesign or publish your first Facebook ad, take a step back and consider your digital strategy. If you don't yet have a digital strategy, you're not alone: Research by [SmartInsights](#) found that 45 per cent of businesses don't have a digital marketing strategy.

In a [detailed article](#) about building a digital marketing plan, Alexandra Tachalova lays out four broad action items your marketing team needs to take as you flesh out your plan:

1. Know your audience. Build customer personas. Figure out where they spend their time online and what online resources they trust for product recommendations. A survey of your current customers can be a great help here.
2. Analyze your competitive landscape. If you own a physical store, you can probably name your local competitors easily. What about your online competitors? Who is trying to solve the same customer pain points as you? How are they communicating their messages? Are there weaknesses in their marketing game that you can turn into a strength for your company?
3. Review the channels you're currently using. Which online marketing channels are you currently using? What results are you getting? Track your time, cost, and effort so you know the full outlay of resources for each conversion. Are certain channels underperforming? Do you know why?

4. Define your main goal and general principles for measuring success. Only with all the information from the steps above can you begin to review and revise your main goals. What are your [goals](#)? Do you want to increase website traffic by 10 per cent? Do you want to lower the cost of each lead to \$10 per lead? Are you simply looking to boost more sales of the product with the highest ROI? Use these goals as your guiding star and break them down into the steps you need to take in order to achieve them.

Once you have a digital marketing strategy in place, focus on the specific tactics that support your top strategies and goals. The range of online marketing opportunities is vast, from email marketing to influencer recruitment, Facebook retargeting and more. Start by gaining a general understanding of each broad category and then dig down into the tactics that best suit your budget, ability, and audience interest.

How to Figure Out Your Digital Marketing Strategy



Your marketing team needs to ask a lot of questions as they figure out your online marketing strategy.

Those questions can be sorted into four categories.

Audience



- Who are your customers?
- Where do they spend their time online?
- What do they trust for recommendations?

Competitors



- Who are your online competitors?
- Which companies are solving the same pain points as your company?
- How are they communicating with customers?

Current channels



- Which online marketing channels is your business already on?
- What results are you getting?
- Do you know why you're getting those results?

Success



- What are your company's goals?
- Are your goals well-defined?
- How can you reach those goals?

Here are the main online marketing best practices to consider.

Website and Ecommerce Platform

Before investing in marketing efforts, make sure your website and ecommerce platform are as strong as they can be. Here are a few best practices to consider:

- Make sure your website is responsive. In a survey by [CIRA](#), 34 per cent of respondents reported that they used their smartphones or mobile devices most often.
- Ensure that your title tags, meta tags, and meta-descriptions (parts of your [search engine optimization efforts](#)) are as strong as they can be for every page.
- Provide compelling, professional images for each product. Include strong keywords in alt-image tags.
- Spend time on your product descriptions. Focus on naturally adding in the keywords your customers would use to search for your product. Write clear, crisp copy that matches your company's personality, and avoid duplicating copy.
- If your website is like an online store, the ecommerce platform that powers it is like everything that happens behind the scenes. An [ecommerce platform](#) helps you manage your sales and ensures you can offer customers a convenient, secure, smooth transaction.

Your marketing efforts will bring customers to your site. Make sure they want to stay and buy something – and can do so easily – when they get there.

Content Marketing for Ecommerce

If you love the idea of building an organic fan base and of helping search engines send customers to your website without paying for ads, then content marketing is your best friend.

“Planning, creating, and distributing valuable and relevant content helps to engage and build a relationship with your target audiences,” according to the article [“The Future of Content Marketing.”](#)

Great content is all about your customers: giving them the information they want in a way that will educate, entertain, or delight them. Successful content marketing campaigns:

- Drive organic traffic to your website by ranking on search engines
- Are shared by your customers with their networks
- Build backlinks, which can boost the ranking of your page
- Can be used in other marketing campaigns
- Position you as a knowledge leader in your field
- Give value to your customers

Content marketing can take different forms, including:

- E-books
- Videos
- Step-by-step tutorials
- Live webcasts
- Infographics
- Webinars
- Podcasts
- Social media posts
- And more

Organic Social Media Marketing

Being online for most users entails spending time on their favorite social media platforms. According to [Social Media Lab](#), Facebook remains the most popular social media platform in Canada, with 83 per cent of Canadian adults owning Facebook accounts. However, it's beginning to lose customer share to other sites, such as YouTube (64 per cent of Canadians have an account) and Instagram (51 per cent of Canadians have an account).

Go to where your customers already are. That means having an account on their favorite social media channels. Look at your customer personas: If your customers tend to be Millennial and Gen Z, then Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok are prime real estate. If, instead, your business is B2B, perhaps LinkedIn and Twitter are the right places to spend your time.

The key to succeeding on social media is to be authentic while also adapting to the norms and expectations of the platform and your audience. For example, Instagram is all about images, so focus on providing eye-popping pictures and graphics that present your products in the most flattering light. Have fun and find your online voice.

Take a look at some of the most popular [commercial social media accounts](#), including PlayStation, which engages fans with new trailers, free games, streaming events, and more.

Paid Advertising

Building organic traffic through content marketing and creating a vibrant social media following takes time and effort. If you have money in your marketing budget, you can also consider using paid advertising.

First, decide where you want to advertise. Some popular options include:

- Google
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Snapchat
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- Reddit

Next, figure out what type of advertising you want to do. For example, Google Adwords offers Google Shopping Ads, Google Display Ads, and Google Text Ads, to name a few. On Facebook, you can create static ads, video ads, and carousel ads, as well as advertise on its extended advertiser network.

Take the time to [research](#) your advertising platform and don't be afraid to experiment with small campaigns to see how your audience responds.

Here are some best practices:

- Figure out the goal of your ad: website visits, newsletter signups, followers on your social media page, etc.
- Get specific with your audience. One of the greatest benefits of online advertising is that you can get granular with your targeting.
- [Test everything](#), including your images, ad headlines, ad copy, keywords, and audience.
- Monitor and revise. Certain ads can be successful for a few weeks and then slow down. Actively monitor your ads and retire ads when they grow cold.

9 Considerations for Ecommerce Website Marketing



1. Website



2. Ecommerce platform



3. Content marketing



4. Social media marketing



5. Paid advertising



6. Influencer marketing



7. Email marketing



8. Retargeting



9. Artificial intelligence

Hire Influencers

Today's consumers are hit with an estimated [6,000 to 10,000 ads a day](#). For your ads to stand out, you need to immediately build trust, and this is where an influencer may be able to help.

The fracturing of attention across new social media channels has led to the rise of smaller audiences in specific niches that are often ruled by influencers. Influencers can be famous for nearly anything, from making elaborate cakes to showcasing carpentry or giving skincare tutorials.

Influencers are trusted within their communities, which makes them an ideal online partner for the right business and products. In fact, [28 per cent of Canadians](#) say they learned about new products from influencers.

How can you hire influencers?

- Figure out which influencers your core customer base trusts.
- Top influencers get pitched all the time, so consider searching for up-and-coming influencers. You can use Google, [Followerwonk](#), [BuzzSumo](#), and [Pitchbox](#) to find influencers.
- Get to know the influencers on their channels to see if they're a good match for your brand.
- Craft a personalized pitch, outlining a partnership idea that benefits the influencer, their followers, and your company.

For example, a baby stroller company may pitch a pregnant influencer by offering them free supplies, along with coupons or a stroller giveaway for their fans.

Email Marketing for Ecommerce Sites

Email remains an excellent way to develop and nurture relationships with your customers, as long as you follow Canada's notoriously strict [anti-spam email laws](#).

The key to a [strong email campaign](#) is to personalize your communication and create an experience based on the needs of the recipient. That means:

- Segmenting your email lists to group similar customers together
- Letting a user's actions dictate how you communicate with them
- Using email to guide them through a personalized customer journey
- Writing strong, clear, compelling email content

A robust [email marketing program](#) is a must-have tool for tracking your customers' interactions with your campaigns and designing the right email campaigns for them. You can send promotions based on a customer's previous purchase, retarget them after they abandon their shopping cart, or quickly pull together a list of cold leads to begin a reintroduction campaign.

Retargeting

The old marketing "[Rule of 7](#)" says a customer must receive a marketing message seven times in order to consider making a purchase. How can you reach the same person seven times, especially when they jump around to different online channels?

One answer is retargeting, which makes it easy to re-engage with customers on different channels and give them opportunities to learn about your company and see your products. The easiest way is to place a tracking cookie, a bit of code, on your website. This cookie will track how a user interacts with your site and will then let you continue to advertise to them through different ad networks, such as Google AdSense.

For example, a customer purchased a dog bed on your website. That person may also be interested in leashes, water bowls, and your top-selling treats. Using your cookie information, you can place ads for these products in front of that person on different sites they visit, which keeps your products front and center in their browser and mind.

Facebook and Instagram also allow you to retarget users. You can upload your email list or customer phone numbers and Facebook will attempt to match them to their users and build a customer list. You can also use a Facebook pixel to retarget users who visit your ecommerce platform through Facebook ads or to build Facebook audiences of individuals who visited your website.

To get started with retargeting, take a look at this article on [How to Master Ad Retargeting as a Marketing Tactic](#).

Use AI

Artificial intelligence is now playing a [major role in marketing](#), especially for ecommerce sites. An [AI program](#) can crunch information and automatically serve your online visitors what they want to see. For example, an ecommerce platform with built-in AI can make product recommendations to a returning customer based on their buying history, show them similar products when they visit your site, and give them personalized search results on your site.

Get Started Today

Building a strong ecommerce marketing machine doesn't happen in a day. Instead, take your time: Start by making your website a great place to shop. Once you've done that, figure out what marketing tactics you can employ. Study your marketing channels so you can make the most of your time and budget.

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Jessica Bennett

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