Momentum

How to Propel Your Marketing and Transform Your Brand in the Digital Age

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Chapter 1

The New Ecosystem: Building Momentum

Momentum.

It's the thrill of a roller coaster gaining speed.

It's an unstoppable train barreling down the tracks.

And it's what every marketer wants in a campaign.

Whether it's a video going viral, or a blog post going from one share to thousands in just a few days, when a marketing initiative has real momentum, it is nothing short of pure magic.

And just like magic, it seems impossible to recreate, impossible to develop using a strategic, systematic approach.

But I'm here to let you in on the magician's secret: You can achieve that momentum yourself, by following five simple principles, principles that will allow you to consistently deliver great results with your marketing.

Today, the digital landscape is constantly changing, and news travels at the speed of a tweet. But there is a way to cut through the noise and build that momentum for your own campaigns.

Want to know the secret?

First, let me ask you this.

What does digital marketing mean to you?

Posting on Facebook and Twitter a few times a week? Emailing a list of subscribers? Cranking out blog posts every few days? Tweaking your website to make it mobile responsive? Trying out the latest new social media platforms to find the trendiest ways of connecting with your audience?

Has digital marketing just added more items to your to-do list?

It doesn't have to be this way. Effective digital marketing isn't about embracing every new tool available to today's marketer – it's about turning your entire approach to marketing on its head.

The Future Has Arrived

Imagine you're going for a jog. You've got your trusty fitness band on, to help you keep track of all the miles you're running and all the calories you're burning. Maybe it'll automatically

post your route to Facebook in case your friends want to join you – or maybe you can even tap it to your friends' bands to compare data and start a little friendly competition.

Now imagine that you're almost at the end of your jogging route, when suddenly, your fitness band shows you an offer for a free sports drink at a store nearby. All you have to do to redeem it is tap the link on your band at checkout. You're hot, tired, thirsty, and right nearby – it's a no-brainer, right?

Next, another offer might pop up, encouraging you to share that same link - along with a picture of yourself, post-jog, sweaty and smiling with that sports drink - to your Facebook page; the link would provide a free drink to any of your Facebook friends who clicked on it. You're not one to keep a good deal to yourself – or to miss out on a great humblebrag opportunity – so of course you share the link and pic. "So happy my little 5-mile morning jog can help get my friends a free drink, too!" Score!

If you're a jogger, you might think of this as an incredibly convenient way to rehydrate on the cheap right when you need it most, and feel some serious appreciation toward the sports drink company for being so thoughtful and generous.

If you're a marketer, you see this as the exciting new reality of building marketing momentum in the digital age.

Instead of blindly sticking millions of identical coupons in newspapers and mailers, hoping that a small percentage of them might land in the right hands and evoke a response, marketers can now target customers individually, at the time, in the place, and through the medium which will make them most likely to respond.

This is nothing less than a *seismic shift.*

The ability to tailor marketing not just to a certain region or a specific demographic, but to an individual – and not just to an individual, but to that individual in the optimal place, time, and way—has revolutionized the nature of marketing.

It's not just the medium that's changed here. It's not even just the ability to customize marketing messages to individual customers.

It's the entire mindset behind marketing. The entire approach.

And this new approach is centered around the creation of real momentum in your marketing – meaningful momentum that helps you reach your goals.

Let's take a closer look at how we got here.

A History of Push Marketing

Marketing is not a new concept. If you've got something to sell, you've got to tell people about it, or no one will ever buy. And since competition isn't new, either, you've also got to explain why customers should choose your product or service over everyone else's.

Ancient marketplaces teemed with merchants crying their wares, each trying to outdo the others. Latin graffiti has even been found scrawled on a wall in Pompeii, advertising the fish

sauce the doomed town was famous for: "Scaurus's best garum, mackerel-based, from Scaurus's manufacturers."

When the printing press came onto the scene, print marketing was suddenly possible. Ads like the following from 1771 appeared in early American newspapers: "James Gardner, Carpenter and Joiner, begs Leave to inform the Publick that he has opened Shop behind the Church. All Gentlemen who please to favour him with their Orders may depend upon his Punctuality, and their Business being well executed. N.B. He makes Window Sashes, on reasonable Terms."

As time went on, the advent of radio, and later TV, meant that marketing took on new layers of sophistication. Still, the approach remained the same – a business pushing its message out to people, hoping that message was appealing enough to compel them to buy.

There were definitely benefits to marketing as it existed by the late twentieth century. Businesses had complete control over their messaging—over the way they and their product were presented. Thanks to mass media's mass audiences, they could reach large groups of people with a single ad. Marketing collateral could be put together quickly, because customers weren't a part of the conversation. And because of this freedom to create elaborate marketing campaigns without customer input affecting their direction, creative marketing really could – and often did - ascend to the status of art.

But when the internet went mainstream in the 1990s, all that began to change.

Suddenly, people had choices. The information they had access to wasn't limited to what they saw in the commercials that companies decided to push at them or read in ads in magazines or newspapers or on billboards – they could now take the initiative themselves to go online and research that company, its products or services, and its reputation. As an audience, they were now divided into smaller segments. Instead of being advertised to whether they liked it or not, customers were now able to opt-in to marketing, supplying their email address directly to the companies whose ads they actually wanted to see.

Faced with this sudden transformation in customer behavior and expectations, marketers found their old methods just weren't working as well anymore. Audiences that were now able to choose which ads they received came to see the old model of marketing as intrusive, pushy, and irrelevant to their unique interests.

The Advent of Pull Marketing

In order to tailor their methods to fit this new trend, marketers developed pull marketing, an approach that harnesses the power of internet search engines and social media to draw people in to your site as opposed to a competitors'.

Before these technologies were available, potential customers had only limited resources for deciding which business to purchase a product from. Ads created by the company and in-person visits or phone calls with salespeople were the only ways to learn more about that company's offerings – and that content was all tightly controlled by the company itself. Now, however, prospects were free to research companies and products on their own. The way a customer did so was via a search engine. But search engines are neutral third parties; a customer using one might end up reading one company's page – or its competitor's – or

even a neutral review site. Pull marketing aimed to make one's own company's site the top choice for anyone looking for information on the kinds of products they offered.

So how did marketers accomplish this? By learning more about their customers and target audiences. Research into the phrases people actually used to search for their products online led to ever more effective SEO tactics. Engagement with people on social media led to clearer insight into what interested their particular audience – which posts garnered clicks, likes, and comments. Creating content based on that information gave companies the tools to more effectively attract traffic to *their* site, where they could then send the brand message they wanted to convey to consumers.

Pull marketing basically put consumers in charge of marketing. Now that they had the power to customize the way they wanted to be marketed to, there was no going back. People wanted to be marketed to only by the companies they had invited to do so, using the medium they preferred. Successful marketers had to embrace this new normal, and cater to these new consumer expectations of personalization and independence.

One example? Permission-based marketing. In its earliest days, email was still considered a venue for push marketing by many companies. Today, of course, those sales emails would be classified as spam. Asking website visitors to opt-in to marketing emails was the marketers' response.

The benefits to pull marketing are clear. Companies can engage *with* the audience in a two-way, personalized conversation, rather than talking *to* them with a one-way, generic ad. This two-way conversation also means companies are able to take consumer responses into consideration when planning future campaigns, making their campaigns more and more effective. All the data companies gather from engaging the consumer makes it possible to target customers more specifically.

The key difference between the two approaches? Push marketing is all about the company. Pull marketing is all about the audience.

Beyond Push and Pull: An Integrated Ecosystem

So what's the problem here? Why isn't every company happily pursuing their inbound, pull marketing plans in this new digital landscape and reaping success after success?

Because of the difficulty of engaging today's segmented audience.

This is not your mother's internet. It's not just a matter of websites and email anymore. Social media is a huge and vital, but constantly changing, force in pull marketing – and like your audience, it's just about as segmented as you can get. There's Facebook and Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest and everything in between—different social media platforms preferred by people with different interests from different demographics. When companies decide to make the shift from outbound, push marketing to inbound, pull marketing, they are often at a loss as to which platforms to use.

Beyond that, many companies struggle with integrating their digital marketing efforts with their traditional ones.

What you don't want to do is blindly jump into new marketing options, becoming active in a new channel or executing some new "best practice" tactic for the sake of staying current, only to exhaust yourself without any results to show for it. That's an easy way to find your entire marketing program losing its focus.

Instead, the answer is to take a strategic approach to all the new opportunities out there – new social media platforms; new ways your prospects are willing to engage with you; new ways you can get your marketing messages out via your website, email marketing program, and more. Take advantage of analytical tools that let you know how your prospects and customers are interacting with you, and use that information to define your ongoing marketing approach.

There is a way to keep pace with the rapidly evolving marketing world, see continuing positive results, and most importantly, do so while keeping your sanity.

It is no longer about which digital marketing tool is the most effective. It's not even just about push vs. pull anymore. We are operating in an entirely new ecosystem, a digital paradigm in which ever-changing digital tools play a key role, but are not the sole drivers of success. While the novelty of the new marketing tools at our disposal can be captivating, it is important to remember the real goal: using those tools strategically, in a way that builds marketing momentum.

There are several key differences between the old model of marketing and the new ecosystem:

Old Paradigm	New Paradigm
Fixed Marketing	**Agile Marketing**
In the old model of marketing, campaigns were developed and then executed as planned, no matter what the response was during their run (though, to be fair, there wasn't really any way to measure the response, except through sales). Now, real-time analytics tracking during campaigns allows marketers to turn on a dime and shift gears instantly to avoid disaster or take advantage of new insights or opportunities.	
Brand-Led	**Customer-Focused**
Marketing messages used to be based on what a company wanted to convey about itself. Now they're based on what a product or service allows customers to convey to others about themselves. And not only that – a modern marketer's entire strategy is based on the information he gathers about his audience and is customized to fit their preferences.	
Focuses on Push Vs. Pull Marketing	**Integrates All Marketing Channels**
Where once marketers would choose between various distinct options – outbound vs. inbound, traditional vs. digital – now, companies are strategically integrating their marketing methods and channels. The focus is no longer on the method or the medium so much as it is on the ROI.	
Quantity Dictates Strategies	**Quality Dictates Strategies**
In the old marketing paradigm, frequency of posting was the key to success; quality was	

secondary. Now, quality is the guiding principle for content, for search, social media, and readers alike.	
Branching Out to Anything New	**Utilizing Relationships to Grow**
As tempting as it can be to jump on the bandwagon and try every new platform that gains some popularity, novelty does not equal effectiveness. And spreading your marketing efforts too thin is never a good idea. Instead of branching out, look within! Some of your most effective digital marketing strategies can come from collaboration and integration with your own partners, customers, and vendors.	
Forces Old Metrics on New Platforms	**Successfully Decodes Digital Data Points**
Just as the marketing ecosystem has changed, so have the data points that determine success in the digital arena, and trying to force old metrics onto these new platforms is just setting yourself up for failure. Understanding how these new digital metrics affect overall goals is a vital part of the new model of marketing.	
"Uses" Digital Marketing	**"Embraces" Digital Mindset**
Using digital marketing means including digital marketing activities as part of a marketing strategy. Embracing a digital mindset means rethinking your entire approach to marketing. Doing so can mean major change – but it's the only way to find success in this new ecosystem.	

The old marketing model focused on choosing a marketing "methodology" – traditional or digital, inbound or outbound, push or pull—but in today's world, where the line between the two is quickly blurring, that forced choice is one that no longer makes sense. Marketers embracing the new ecosystem recognize that, rather than choosing between options, we have to integrate them strategically.

Take event marketing, a very traditional marketing channel. You invite prospects and customers to your event and hand them "swag bags" full of marketing messaging—a very "push" approach. But today, throughout the event, those attendees are also active on social media, using your event hashtag on Twitter and other platforms, interacting with other attendees and hopefully your marketing team—a very "pull" approach.

Your traditional event marketing channel also is no longer limited to just reaching attendees. You can now have a virtual, digital audience that is downloading slide decks, watching live streams of event presentations, and engaging with attendees via social media in real time. What was once a marketing campaign restricted to a single physical space is now a marketing campaign that is global.

Some companies are even taking event marketing and other traditional marketing channels and turning those campaigns into completely digital events. SafetyLine Lone Worker is a Canadian SaaS that offers a safety monitoring solution for people who work alone. It ran a campaign in which it threw an online "launch party" for its new website. The digital event mimicked a more traditional in-person event, with presentations in the form of webinars, and even provided attendees with "virtual swag bags" with coupons and e-book downloads.

One challenge in this new ecosystem is not running a campaign just because it's new or different, but rather making sure that campaign is also the best way to meet the particular goal at hand. In SafetyLine's case, a fully digital event marketing effort made *more* sense than a physical event, because the main goal of the campaign was to get its email subscriber list to reconnect with the company and take the steps necessary for SafetyLine to become compliant with Canada's new anti-spam law. It just happened that the team decided a fun new marketing tactic would be the best way to achieve that goal.

Organizations that follow the old paradigm of marketing let tools dictate their campaigns and strategies. Often, they ask "What can we do with this new tool?" when they should be asking, "Can this new tool help us with our existing business goals and strategies?"

SafetyLine's marketing team realized a new tool – the ability to host a virtual event marketing campaign with elements that approximated an in-person event – could help it achieve a very specific goal. Voila! Integrated, strategic digital marketing – a poster child for marketing in the new ecosystem.

How Your Company Can Embrace the New Ecosystem, Too

In this book, I'll be introducing the 5 essential principles to building marketing momentum in the digital age – Agility, Customer Focus, Integration, Content Curation, and Cross-Pollination.

Here's what to expect from each chapter:

Chapter 2: 1st Principle of Momentum: Agility Through Analytics – Far from the static marketing campaigns of the past, the new ecosystem demands agile marketing based on analytics. This chapter will show you how to lay the groundwork for agility, introduce the most helpful analytics tools, and show you exactly how to tweak your marketing strategy to drive results.

Chapter 3: 2nd Principle of Momentum: Customer Focus – The new marketing ecosystem is completely customer-driven, from its reliance on customer engagement and feedback to its focus on customization. But perhaps most importantly, the most successful digital marketing today enables consumer self-expression. This chapter will show you how to craft your marketing strategy to attract your ideal customers.

Chapter 4: 3rd Principle of Momentum: Integration – No one surfs the internet in a linear way – we all click from link to link, delving into bits we find interesting, ignoring those we don't. Marketing today works the same way. Customers interact with you simultaneously via multiple channels, both physical and digital. This chapter will discuss ways to merge your strategies for individual channels into one cohesive whole.

Chapter 5: 4th Principle of Momentum: Content Curation – The old model of marketing demanded content in high quantities. The new model focuses on quality and smart content curation. This chapter will show you how to become a guru amidst a crowd of wannabes, and attract visitors – and ultimately, customers – with your unique content.

Chapter 6: 5th Principle of Momentum: Cross-Pollination – Every resource you have can be harnessed to give your marketing more momentum, and this chapter will show you how.

From leveraging relationships with employees, vendors, and partners, to integrating everything, you'll learn how to move from scattered to strategic in your use of the assets available to you.

The final chapter, **Chapter 7: Measuring Marketing ROI in the Digital Age**, will then focus on how to measure marketing ROI in this new ecosystem. In today's multi-touch marketing world, are you mistaking the final touch point as the only point of conversion? You have to make sure that you are considering the multi-faceted nature of today's marketing as you measure ROI.

Making the change from the old model of marketing to the new ecosystem of momentum doesn't have to be difficult. In fact, as you make the transition, you'll see right away how much easier it is to handle than the old model, with its constant push for more content and more posts on more social media platforms. So take a deep breath, let go of your current notions of marketing, and let's dive into the new reality of digital marketing together.

Chapter 2

1st Principle of Momentum: Agility Through Analytics

MOMENTUM MEMO

Agility means the ability to pivot and change direction quickly, based on data gained from in-depth analytics, in order to take advantage of opportunities to grow your business. Your business's marketing momentum depends heavily on its ability to embrace agility and continuously revamp its strategies based on analytics.

How many times have you heard the business mantra "Adapt or Die?" It's a common enough saying that you'd think this first principle of momentum, agility, was nothing new – the imperative to change according to market conditions has always been a major part of business.

But what hasn't always been a part of business is the incredible amount of data now available, from supply chain tracking information to ecommerce website analytics.

Due to this constant influx of data, "adapting" is no longer something that can take place only every once in a while – every few years, say, or even every quarter. Today agile businesses can, and should, adapt to changing conditions and new information almost instantly.

The sheer volume of data available in real-time about every aspect of consumers' interactions with your emails, social media posts, blog posts, website, and paid ads means that shaping and refining strategies and campaigns based on that information is a never-ending process.

And that process is the single most essential element in capitalizing on and building momentum from your marketing successes.

In the world of digital marketing, things happen at the speed of light. A well-timed tweet can go viral in seconds, spreading brand awareness in no time flat – think Oreo's famous tweet when the lights went out at the Super Bowl in 2013 ("Power out? No problem. You can still dunk in the dark"). It's that kind of swift move to take advantage of a trending topic or a new insight into audience behavior that creates the momentum you need to be successful in today's marketing ecosystem – and it's the constant tweaks and course adjustments, based on data about your audience's responses to your marketing, that continue to build that momentum.

Agility in marketing leads directly to marketing momentum.

So how can your company go about becoming more agile?

Agility in Action

Let's take another look at that sports drink company we mentioned in Chapter One – we'll call them Marketade. How did Marketade come up with the idea to promote its drinks through mobile and Facebook offers? Did Stan in Marketing just come up with the brilliant idea during a meeting one day, all fleshed out and ready to implement?

Yeah, probably not.

The idea probably began as a much simpler version of the promotion, maybe just an offer for a free drink popping up once a jogger reached the end of their route.

Now, Marketade is an agile company, so it tracks its analytics carefully, and then puts its insights to good use.

In looking at the data here, Stan probably noticed that their initial offer was successful, and not only that – customers weren't waiting to redeem it, but instead were going to the nearest store to immediately get their free drink. But even more exciting than that, *they were then sharing the fact that they had gotten a free drink with friends on social media!*

Had anyone asked them to share this information? Nope. Did they get any benefit from telling friends? No. And yet there they were, letting their friends know about the promotion. What gives?

People love to share that they've gotten a deal with friends – especially when associating themselves with a certain product or service makes them look good. And what could possibly make you look better than sharing a deal on a healthy drink, thus subtly letting friends know how fit and health-conscious you are?

Stan realized that Marketade was really on to something here. How could they tweak the campaign to capitalize on the momentum that was already building through these voluntary shares?

First, Stan decided to make immediate offer redemption part of the deal. So many people were already doing it on their own that making it mandatory might just inspire the rest to do so, too. The offer was then linked to stores nearby the ends of the joggers' routes to make it an easy yes. This first tweak strengthened the momentum already in motion.

Next, Stan added a step that customers were already taking on their own – but made it even more attractive, so that more of them would participate by offering another discount for friends when a jogger posted a selfie on Facebook with their free drink. In the process, Marketade capitalized on our love affair with selfies as well as our desire to associate ourselves with products that make us look good and our excitement about sharing great deals with friends.

The result? Marketing gold. Stan's tweaks to the campaign really only took what customers were already doing and made it a standard part of the deal, but by tapping into what people were willing to do anyway and attaching a reward to it, he increased the momentum of the campaign dramatically.

If Stan hadn't been checking his analytics religiously, he wouldn't have known about the customer response until it was too late to take advantage of it. But by listening and observing and tracking, he was able to make his campaign into something much more effective than it ever could have been in its original form.

That is agility.

That is marketing momentum.

Growth Hacking: Agility on Steroids

You may have heard the term *growth hacking* being thrown around the internet in recent years. What is it, exactly?

Growth hacking is the method used by many tech startups that burst onto the scene with a vengeance, popping into the marketplace out of nowhere and disrupting their industry by growing from literally nothing to a thriving business in as little time as possible.

Growth hackers use an extreme version of agility tactics. Unlike established companies, they don't feel bound by conventional marketing methods – instead, they look for uniquely creative ways to get the most possible out of their marketing efforts. They scrutinize analytics constantly, and make major changes instantly based on trends and insights gleaned from them, to amp up results. Focus is key in growth hacking – every single move is based on data and aimed at growth. It's the perfect marriage of left-brain and right-brain, creativity and science. And this uber-emphasis on agility means that growth-hacking companies can sometimes go from 0 to 60 in just a few weeks - the momentum produced can be almost unbelievable.

New businesses in other industries can use these tactics, too, as can established companies, with just a little tweaking.

Here's a real-world example:

A Fortune 500 client of ours was launching a new educational app for kids. It enabled kids to practice math and English skills they needed more help on, as well as work ahead of their grade level for enrichment. It displayed results to parents, so they could keep track of their children's progress, and could even be synched up with input from teachers and used by school systems. All in all, it was a really exciting new tool for kids, parents, and educators alike.

The client wanted to make a big splash, so the Marketing Zen team decided to use growth hacking techniques to reach their ambitious goals for explosive growth.

First, we set up a killer landing page, designed with one simple conversion in mind – capturing people's email addresses. We kept it focused, with minimal text, a strong call to action, a design centered around the sign-up field, and a short demo video. This landing page was our cornerstone, our growth hacking focus. We wanted email addresses so that we would have a huge audience of excited potential users to contact as soon as the app launched.

Next, we set up social media accounts for the brand, and started an intensive campaign to spread brand awareness among our target audiences. We ran paid ads on Facebook targeting moms, in order to gain fans for the Facebook page, get our name in front of them, and drive them to the landing page. We researched influential mommy bloggers and educational gurus, and followed them on Twitter, in order to encourage them to follow us in return, to make them aware of our existence, and to drive them to the landing page.

Then, we started an influencer outreach campaign, building strategic relationships with some of those mommy bloggers and influencers in the field of education, and offering to write guest blogs on their sites. Posts we wrote for them reached their audiences and others, as we also shared them on Stumbleupon via paid ads. In fact, one post went viral on Stumbleupon, getting reblogged over and over again. In every guest post was a link to the landing page.

But that's only where the campaign *started*. Every step of the way, we kept one eye glued to the analytics. When we saw that traffic was hitting the landing page, but not converting at the rates we wanted, we tweaked the text and design and even added special offers in return for signing up, until we had created a veritable conversion machine. When we realized how effective our outreach strategy was in generating new traffic to the landing page, we sweetened the deal for influencers in order to get more of them on board, offering them exclusive deals and early access.

Nothing was sacred. Everything was susceptible to change, if the analytics so dictated. And thanks to our growth hacking tactics, our pre-launch campaign built up a sizeable email subscriber list and kept them excited through regular email updates, continued activity on social media, and outreach, so that even before the app launched, its momentum was already substantial – and it's still growing.

The radical agility practiced by growth hackers may not be the right choice for every company, but it does clearly demonstrate the link between analytics, agility, and marketing momentum.

Your Turn

So how can your company make the switch to an agile marketing mindset?

As we saw above, it's all about the analytics.

But before you can start using analytics to inform your marketing strategies, you first need to assess your current situation, define targets and goals, and create an overall plan.

With that in mind, here how to lay the necessary groundwork for agility in your business:

1. Start with a clean slate, assessing absolutely everything in your current marketing strategy with a critical eye.

If you truly want to embrace agility, you'll need to let go of some things you've grown used to - or even attached to – in your current marketing strategy. Assume the mindset of a complete stranger, a consultant coming in and seeing your marketing strategy for the very first time. What does your overall strategy look like currently? What do all the moving parts

look like? What have your results been like, both for individual campaigns and channels, and overall? Why do you do the things you currently do?

Business X - let's say they're an IT solutions provider - has used the same basic strategy for years. They put their website in place, and have pretty much left it alone since they built it, after optimizing it for SEO at the time. They do have a blog, updated regularly and enthusiastically by an employee who treats it a lot more like a personal blog than a company blog. They send out email newsletters to their customers and prospects every so often – not really on a regular basis, but as often as they can get to it. And they have a presence on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, since they heard that every business worth its salt these days had to have social media accounts – but only rarely have the time to post.

The results of their digital marketing efforts have been lackluster. Their site gets some traffic, but most deals are still made via the same old outbound techniques their salespeople have been using for years. Their newsletters don't seem to have much of an effect, unless they announce a sale or deal, and their social media accounts sit mostly idle. Their blog is popular with its writer's friends and family, but doesn't seem to attract many other visitors – or more importantly, any leads.

Basically, they are online because you have to be in order to be taken seriously. And with a pretty much nonexistent ROI from their inbound marketing, they felt they couldn't really justify the amount of resources it would take to keep up with everything on a regular basis.

When Business X took a good look at their current strategy, they realized that they didn't really have a solid "why" behind most of the things they did. They also admitted to themselves that they had been checking analytics only sporadically, and certainly not taking any action based on the data, other than growing frustrated with the few resources they were putting towards marketing.

2. Identify your business goals.

Of course you're already aware of your company's overall goals. But listing them out on paper puts them in the forefront of your mind, and will allow you to refer back to them easily while working on your marketing plan. Every aspect of your marketing strategy should be directly traceable back to your overall goals as a business – otherwise, you're wasting resources.

Business X's list of overall goals: To increase sales by a specific percentage each year. To reach more prospects, create brand awareness, and establish themselves as industry leaders. To boost the number of clients who enter into long-term consultative contracts, rather just buying a solution in a one-time transaction.

3. Identify your conversion goals.

What exactly does "conversion" mean to you - in the context of your overall marketing strategy, as well as in the context of each channel and campaign you plan to use? Maybe you want sales – okay, good. But maybe you're after email addresses instead (or also!), or likes on Facebook, or something entirely different. That's fine, too – the important thing is that you define what you want upfront, and make sure these goals are measurable and trackable.

Email addresses and Facebook likes can be counted; "brand awareness" is a more nebulous goal.

Business X's old marketing strategy had a vague focus on brand awareness and attracting leads, but nothing really quantifiable. Instead of actively targeting specific conversions, they had simply been going through the motions—doing the blog, doing social media –without any concrete purpose in mind.

They set new conversion goals. Now, all digital marketing efforts would be aimed at reaching a wider audience through thought leadership, and then gathering as many email addresses from that new audience as possible, in order to add prospects to their email subscriber list. That way, they could begin moving them through the sales funnel, directing them towards the specific relationship Business X wanted to have with them.

4. Quick Check: Do your conversion goals correspond with the stated goals of your business?

Take a look at what you're striving for online, and whether it matches up with your real-world goals for your company. Getting Facebook likes is all well and good, but if it's not leading to more sales of your gadgets, and that's your goal, then you need to rethink what you consider a conversion online.

For Business X, email marketing was the digital marketing channel that they felt would be most effective at helping them reach their overall business goals. Therefore, all other efforts would now ultimately be geared towards persuading people to share their email addresses.

5. Define your target profiles.

Next, you want to figure out who it is you're targeting with your online marketing efforts. Get specific—not just "women," but "married women with kids, between the ages of 30 and 45, who make over $50,000 a year and enjoy animals." Come up with at least three different profiles for your ideal customers, then research where those people hang out online and what speaks to them.

Business X already had a very in-depth understanding of the kinds of business customers it wanted to target. What it didn't know, however, was how to reach those people online. So the marketing department did some research into which social media platforms their customers used most heavily – Facebook? Twitter? LinkedIn? Instagram? Pinterest? – and what sort of content they engaged with while there. They looked at what sorts of blog posts and email newsletters truly interested their target audience, and what kind of resources they wanted to see on an IT solutions provider's website. They polled their current customers, asked prospects, searched for industry conversations happening on social media, and drew up complete profiles that detailed where and how to reach the exact people they wanted to reach online.

They found that their target audience mostly hung out on LinkedIn and Twitter, and appreciated industry-related information – tips for choosing an IT solution, for example, or explanations of how various solutions could help with different issues.

6. Create an overall digital marketing strategy.

Based on the above goals and information, develop your new strategy. It may be similar to your existing one, or it may be completely different. The key is that you now have specific goals to work towards, the results of which are measurable and based on concrete data. You'll determine which channels you'll use and what type of content you'll create based on your target audience's preferences. You'll decide which conversion goals to pursue, based on your overall business goals.

Since Business X's overarching marketing goal was to gain email addresses for email marketing, all other marketing activities had to be geared towards that end. So social media campaigns needed to entice people to click through to a landing page that collected their email address. The website needed to give visitors the chance to share their email on every page. And even the email newsletter going out to current subscribers needed to ask them to forward it to a friend who might find it useful, in the hopes that they might subscribe, too.

7. Develop individual marketing campaigns and initiatives.

Within your new strategy, you can now finally begin to create individual campaigns. Again, these should all be geared towards driving the specific, quantifiable conversions you've decided on, which should all contribute clearly to your larger business goals.

Business X decided they would post educational blog posts filled with useful industry information on LinkedIn on a regular basis, as well as taking an active part in the conversations in industry Groups there. They also planned to create a free ebook containing valuable information for their target audience, promote it on Twitter, and give it away to anyone who subscribed to their emails. And they decided to start updating their website with new, search-friendly content, in order to attract more prospects via Google.

8. Realize that the marketing strategy and campaigns you just spent so much time on will need to change – many times.

You already know this, of course, but knowing something and really being ready and willing to do it are two different things. In order to become an agile marketer, you've got to be truly willing to make changes – sometimes tiny, sometimes drastic – based on what you see in your analytics. And not just once, but over and over again—every single time you see something that needs to be acted on. Creating a strategy is not a one and done-type thing. Your strategy and campaigns will need constant tweaking.

Business X committed to thinking of each change they would make as the next step in an ongoing process, not as revisiting something that had been finished.

9. Don't expect instant results.

Unless you're a growth hacker looking for instant results from an intensive marketing push, it's not just ok but *necessary* to give your strategy some time to work. Don't get worried if orders don't start pouring in immediately once you publish that blog post, or if no one has signed up for your webinar yet, even though you sent the email yesterday. Look at what's happening week by week, and sometimes even month by month, to see where trends are emerging and where changes need to be made.

Business X decided to look at their analytics on a daily basis in order to see what was taking off and what was not so successful, but determined that they would hold back and give their campaigns a chance to work rather than get frustrated and change things too soon.

10. As Captain Picard would say: *Engage!*

Put those campaigns into action, and start watching your analytics.

Business X launched its campaigns, grabbed some popcorn, and settled in to watch what would happen…

11. Fan the flames.

Now that the groundwork has been laid for agile, analytics-driven marketing, the real work begins. This is where you monitor, analyze, and then tweak, over and over again, until you have optimized and fine-tuned your campaigns and your strategy to achieve their highest possible levels of success. This is where you find out where the momentum is slowly beginning to build in your marketing efforts, and then fan the flames by adding more and more fuel to those successful areas.

Business X saw that their conversations in LinkedIn Groups were having a real effect on quality traffic coming to their site, so they decided to ramp up their efforts in that area. They also noticed that traffic from search was still not as high as they wanted it to be, so they decided to try paid ads on Google, as well. They discovered that Twitter posts that included an image were significantly more effective at driving traffic to the site to subscribe then those without, so they created images to attract more attention. The constant tweaks paid off in more conversions – more email addresses – which in turn meant that overall business goals were being reached.

Analytics Tools

When it comes to analytics, there's no one-size-fits-all tool that tracks every piece of data on every platform. So it's important to understand what types of tools are available, and how to combine them.

The analytics tool that has the most direct and noticeable impact on your day-to-day marketing activities and campaigns is *marketing automation software*. This branch of business software covers a very wide range of capabilities, although the term typically is used to define software that helps marketers:

- collect and track data across multiple channels,

- organize and sort that data to make database segmentation much easier when creating targeted campaigns, and

- actually help execute marketing campaigns, while tracking the progress and results of those efforts.

Here's a (very) limited list of marketing automation technology vendors, ranging from email-specific tools to full marketing automation suites. Some are better suited for smaller businesses, some are highly scalable and appeal to both SMB and enterprise companies, and

others probably are best described as enterprise-class. But all are established in the marketing industry.

- HubSpot – An all-in-one marketing platform to track analytics and optimize marketing efforts.
- AWeber – Affordable and easy-to-use email marketing and analytics.
- Mail Chimp – Intuitive email marketing and data tracking.
- Constant Contact – Designed to help small business and nonprofits grow through analytics and automation.
- Return Path – Sees data as the key to building relationships.
- Oracle – A pioneer in the industry, Oracle optimizes the entire marketing process, from lead capture to completed deal.
- Aprimo – Focuses on integration of all aspects of marketing automation software.
- Infusionsoft - Exclusively for small businesses, Infusionsoft offers lead generation tools and marketing automation, as well as email and social media tools.
- Silverpop – Internationally used Silverpop offers simple marketing automation and email marketing solutions for mid-sized to large enterprises.
- Pardot - Automated support for the longer timespan and multi-step decisions involved in B2B sales.
- Marketo – Developed by marketers, Marketo includes marketing automation, social marketing, lead nurturing, budget management, analytics, sales insight, and website personalization.

Next are *website statistics tools*. Any discussion of analytics tools, and website statistics tools in particular, has to mention Google Analytics. It is free to use and provides a wealth of information on website traffic and visitor behavior across nine main measurement and tool areas:

- Advertising and campaign performance

- Analysis and testing

- Audience characteristics and behavior

- Cross-device and cross-platform measurement

- Data collection and management

- Mobile apps

- Product integrations

- Sales and conversions

- Site and app performance

And here are four categories Google Analytics uses to calculate results metrics:

- Content: How many times was a particular page viewed?

- Goals: Which pages' URLs contributed to the highest goal conversion rate?

- Ecommerce: How much value did a given page contribute to a transaction?

- Internal Search: Which internal search terms contributed to a transaction?

On top of the analytical tool itself being offered at no cost, Google also provides educational courses and online help forums for free, so users can learn how to make the most out of the tool's features.

For marketers looking for even more in-depth analysis, there are also enterprise-class analytics tools available that collect more data and allow for more customized metrics reporting. There are also data collection and analysis tools that specifically drill into social media platforms and metrics.

Combining a website analytics tool with a social media tool and metrics from marketing automation technology provides a complete overview of your digital marketing data, and allows you to track and measure your campaigns and marketing strategy.

Testing is also a vital part of tweaking your campaigns to make them more effective. Why put just one webpage or email out there to collect data on, when you can get twice as much data from two? Some marketing automation software suites have testing capabilities built into their feature set, and there are also software packages that handle A/B tests, from the technical elements of executing the tests to keeping track of statistical significance to ensure you are making informed decisions in your ongoing testing and optimization program that is based on meaningful data.

Google Analytics offers some testing tools for landing pages, and Google AdWords has testing tools for paid search ads. Here is a short list of some business-class testing technology available:

- Optimizely – Wants to help you deliver the best possible customer experience.

- Maxymiser – Enables A/B and multivariate testing.

- Adobe Test&Target – Focuses on customizing experiences for your customers.

- KISSmetrics – Customer intelligence helps you understand your users.

- Unbounce – Focuses on high converting landing pages.

- Visual Website Optimizer – Bills itself as the world's easiest split testing tool.

Agile Analytics Tips

Of course, every business is unique, and so every strategy and every campaign will be unique, as well. But you should be looking many the same types of analytics no matter what—and you'll want to respond to what those analytics tell you in broadly similar ways. Here's your game plan for some of the most common analytics findings:

1. Balance your traffic sources. When you look at a pie chart showing which percentage of your website traffic came from where, take note of those traffic sources and their different percentages. Ideally, you want to "balance out your traffic sources so that about 40% come from search, 20% from direct traffic, 20% from referring sites, and 10% from campaigns. If

a higher percentage is finding you through searches, you're a little too exposed to Google's algorithm changes. If you're getting less than 20% of your visitors from direct traffic, you need to do more offline advertising. If less than 20% of your visitors come from referring sites, you need to up your blogging outreach and social media sharing. And if less than 10% come from your campaigns, you need to rethink how those campaigns are structured.

2. Look at repeat visits to understand customer behavior. Repeat visitors are the ones you've hooked, and you want to know what you did right to get them to come back. Look at the length and depth of their visits, as well as how far apart those visits were spaced, to see what they're doing on your site and when. Which pages are they visiting? That will show you what they like – and what they probably want to see more of.

3. Look for your most frequently visited pages and make more like them. It only makes sense that if customers keep coming back for certain types of pages, you should keep them happy by creating more of the same. Those pages are the ones that have proven to be most effective for you – why wouldn't you make more just like them? If recipes featuring your products bring people back, keep posting new ones. If your customers like to read educational content about your industry, keep it coming.

4. Look for landing pages that are not working. If landing pages for campaigns aren't producing results, you've got to figure out why, and fix it. Maybe the wrong people are being targeted by your campaign – in which case you need to rethink that campaign. Or maybe something about the page itself is poor – the content is lacking, or the design is confusing. Whatever the reason, you need to find it—and change it.

5. Pay attention to which traffic source provides you with visitors who stay the longest and do what you want them to do. Maybe you have a ton of traffic coming from search – but they hardly ever buy. On the other hand, you have only a few visitors coming in from your campaigns – but they always end up staying a long time and usually buy something! Accordingly, you should focus on ramping up your campaigns to bring in more of those buyers.

6. Check data about abandoned carts and forms. Many marketers forget to check and see at which point people abandon their carts or stop filling out a form. Maybe once they see how much shipping is, they balk…or maybe it's because you don't accept Paypal…or because Paypal is your only method of payment. Maybe the form just gets annoying after the third or fourth unnecessary question. Check to see where you're losing people, and fix it.

7. Check heat map reporting and analytics. Where do people click on your pages? If your site is well designed, the organization of your pages will guide readers' eyes to the places you want them to go. Visitors will find it easy to follow the path they need, and click where you'd like them to click. But if things are too confusing, they might click around randomly for a bit and then leave, frustrated.

8. Confirm that your calls to action are working. If you're asking a customer to do something, you want them to do it. If they are, you've got it right – but if they're not clicking or downloading or buying, your call to action needs to be tweaked.

9. Look for the most effective content on your website, and make more content like it. These aren't necessarily the pages that are visited most often – they're the ones that lead

visitors to buy, or whatever else it is you want your visitors to do, whether that's downloading something or signing up for something. Once you identify content that's converting, have your other content imitate it.

10. Make tag clouds out of the search keywords driving traffic to your site to see if they're the ones you really want. This one is fun *and* useful! Take the keywords people used to find your site, go to www.wordle.net, and create a tag cloud with them. This will give you an instant visual of which words dominate searches that lead to your website, and which don't. Adjust your keyword strategy accordingly.

11. Make tag clouds out of your internal search keywords, too. You can do the same thing with searches on your site to see what visitors have been looking for, and then use that info to spark blog content ideas or create new products.

12. Look at your conversions campaign by campaign to save money. Don't lump all your campaigns together when looking at your results. Instead, review each one individually. Save resources by cutting the campaigns that aren't working, and focusing your efforts on the ones that are.

13. Find the exit points in your structured path analysis. Maybe visitors come to your site, read a blog post or two, and then leave. Or maybe they read a blog post, read your "About Me" page, look at your products for a few seconds, and then leave. If they're leaving without buying, you want to know why. Which page lost their interest? Find it and fix it.

14. Be alert for unknowns in your data. Check for alerts in your analytics. If there was an unexplained spike or dip in your activity, try to figure out why. What was happening during that time period? And how can you recreate or avoid that later?

15. Use bounce rate information to optimize pages. If visitors are bouncing—leaving your pages almost as soon as they arrive—you need to fix them. Which pages make them leave? Which ones don't? Experiment with changes in content and appearance until bounce rates are reduced.

16. Scale up your efforts on traffic sources that are doing well. If you're getting a lot of people from your social media campaigns, start working those campaigns even harder. Same goes for if you're getting quality traffic from referral sites, or even search, if you're building that up as a source—do more of what's working.

17. If a traffic source isn't providing enough visitors, change your approach. If you aren't getting anyone from searches, or from your campaigns, then determine what you're doing wrong, and make changes accordingly.

18. Test different versions of webpages and emails – even blog titles and email subject lines. If you're not sure what approach to take on a certain page or in a certain email, but have a few options, try split-testing them, and then use the resulting data to decide.

But remember: No individual tip is as important as looking at how everything you do online interacts with everything else. All of your company's online activities should be integrated. Your website, your social media, your blog, your paid ads – it's all interconnected. What you

do in one place will affect what happens in the others, and vice versa. Look at your online marketing strategy as a whole, rather than as a bunch of segmented pieces, and you'll be ahead of the game.

<sidebar to be placed in second half of chapter, anytime from the "Your Turn" section on>

A Company Getting It Right

Business operations and customer relations software company SAP is a great example of a large enterprise fully embracing the concept of agility and establishing a robust testing and optimization program.

In 2009 SAP VP Shawn Burns set about creating enterprise web analytics at the company to replace a disparate set of analytics tools then in use in various divisions of the very large organization. Six months into the process of getting all of SAP's business data and analytics "under one roof," so to speak, Burns had a realization – he understood that just having all that data in one place wasn't maximizing its value. What SAP needed was to, as Burns put it, get "a process and dedicated team" that would focus on the data "to squeeze the value out of it."

The result of Burns' epiphany was the creation of SAP's Test Lab, a dedicated testing and optimization team that, since its creation, has run tests and optimized elements across SAP's marketing efforts in different channels and even different global marketplaces.

SAP's Test Lab keeps an organized queue of tests to be performed that are ranked by value to the company, knowing that the Test Lab is a finite corporate resource. The team also keeps documentation to preserve institutional knowledge gained from every test. Now the team runs around 25 tests each quarter..

Why such a limited number of tests? The Test Lab's goal is continual improvement and optimization, and their team is willing to run multiple iterations on specific testing areas, such as visual imagery in marketing material, to fully optimize results for each element in a given test.

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The only path to agility is through analytics. By focusing on your goals, continuously tracking your results, and then tweaking your campaigns to take advantage of trends, you can fan the flames of momentum building around your marketing efforts and maximize their effects. It's not about sticking to a plan anymore – it's about pivoting instantly as need dictates.

Chapter 2 Takeaways:

- **Agility is the first principle of momentum.**
- **Agility means making frequent adjustments to your marketing strategy and campaigns based on data gleaned from analytics.**
- **Growth hacking takes agility to the extreme, in order to produce incredible marketing momentum.**

- **In order to become agile, you must first lay the groundwork by assessing your current marketing situation, defining goals and targets, and developing a new strategy.**
- **Analytics tools like marketing automation software, website analytics, social media analytics, and testing software are vital in your pursuit of agility.**
- **Certain trends in the data of your analytics call for certain specific changes to be made to your strategy – putting the right tweak in place at the right time is crucial to building momentum.**

Chapter 3

2nd Principle of Momentum: Customer Focus

MOMENTUM MEMO

Customer focus means identifying who your customers are, listening to (and acting on) their input and feedback, and personalizing their experience with your company. Being customer focused means being a brand whose values your customer wants to be associated with. Building marketing momentum through customer focus is a just matter of putting the customer in charge.

Just as with agility, a focus on the customer isn't exactly a revolutionary idea, on the face of it. Of course businesses focus on their customers – how else would they make any money? The customer is always right, remember? Why else would businesses spend millions on focus groups, and incentivize customer surveys? The customer is king, and always has been!

But in the old model, no matter how much customer input was sought, and no matter how much a specific demographic was catered to, all marketing was, in the end, company-led, not customer-led.

Companies decided how they would market to their customers. Companies determined the brand experience that each customer would encounter. Companies developed the messaging they wanted customers to receive. Every aspect of companies' marketing was tightly controlled.

Through the power of the internet, however, all of that changed. With the advent of Facebook and Twitter, review sites, and influencer blogging, customers suddenly had a public forum to speak their minds about products and services, and broadcast their opinions and experiences to huge audiences.   The balance of power shifted; an individual's online comments about a brand could have more of an effect on the way that company was perceived than even the most carefully crafted marketing campaign. This loss of control over their brands' images meant that companies had to rethink their entire approach to marketing.

As a graduate student at the University of Texas at Austin, I did my thesis on Twitter. (No, it wasn't in 140 characters.) One of the pivotal questions of my thesis was this: Why do people use social networking sites? My (incorrect) hypothesis was that people wanted to connect to each other. But my research revealed that this was only the secondary reason. The primary reason was to showcase their own identity.

I'll pause while you give a moment's thought to the narcissism of society. Then, I'll urge you to think deeper. We, as humans, have always had an innate need to express ourselves. By that very expression, we further our identity.

Smart companies, such as Facebook (with their timeline feature) and Amazon (with their personalized recommendations), are already taking advantage of what I refer to as an Identity-Based Ecosystem. The digital world of tomorrow, be it consumer or business, will revolve around the identity of the individual. To succeed, companies will have to be proactive about harnessing the idea that showcasing our identity is the most human and primary of desires.

The question companies asked used to be: What does our brand say about us? Today the question needs to be: What does doing business with us allow our customers to say about themselves?

Today, every single marketing move a customer-focused company makes is dictated by the customer. The starting point of every strategy must be the customer's perspective, not the company's. Through the analytics and testing we discussed in the last chapter, businesses work to discover who their customers are, what kinds of content they actively seek out and want to engage with and share, how and where and when they want to be marketed to, which values they want to be seen to espouse, and what types of brand experiences they get excited about. This laser-like focus on the customer produces uniquely strong marketing momentum – because who doesn't love a deal tailored to their exact preferences?

So how does this change in focus play out in an actual marketing campaign? Let's peek into the inner workings of Marketade again to find out.

Customer Focus in Action

We've already heard all about how Stan from Marketing tweaked Marketade's free drink campaign based on analytics, finding the areas where momentum was building naturally and making changes in those areas in order to fan the flames. But we never did find out where the original idea for a free drink at the end of a jogger's route came from.

For this brilliant idea, Marketade had Savanna (also from Marketing) to thank. Savanna was the force behind the company's intensive push to become customer-focused. She spent not just days, not just weeks, but months online, listening to customers' social media conversations, reading relevant blogs, and delving into the data about Marketade's online audience.

Once she had put together a pretty solid picture of the demographics of Marketade's customers, their interests, values, and habits, whose blogs they read, where they liked to hang out online, and what they liked to do there, Savanna created a few different customer personas, or profiles, to embody what she had learned.

For example, there was "Annie," a 30-something mom who spent most of her time online connecting with other moms on Facebook, was into fitness and health related blogs, often shared posts with friends on social media, and was in a moms' jogging club that kept in touch via Facebook, sharing their jogging routes and successes using their Fitbits.

Then there was "Bryan," a single guy in his late 20s, who was into business leadership and fitness in equal measures. His social media posts consisted mainly of links to business-related or fitness-related content, with occasional selfies taken on various fitness

adventures – rock climbing, kayaking - thrown in, as well. Bryan was no fitness novice – he was into the nitty-gritty details of dietary supplements and the latest workout trends.

Using these two customer personas, Savanna was then able to imagine what types of marketing campaigns would be most appealing to Marketade's customer base. Putting herself in Annie's shoes, she realized that Annie wanted to be seen as a health- and fitness-conscious mom by her circle of friends – and not only that, but one who helped those friends on their own journeys to healthier living. This was the image of herself she projected through Facebook posts and the values that were important to her. In order to market to Annie effectively, Marketade needed to provide Annie with the opportunity to make that statement about herself to her friends, and give her a way to help them, as well.

Putting herself in Bryan's shoes, Savanna saw that Bryan understood the importance of refueling with the right dietary supplement at the right time – and would also value convenience in his non-stop businessman's day.

With these two goals in mind, Savanna created the offer: At the end of a jogging route, a free sports drink. Annie, with her group of jogging moms, would probably delight in telling her friends about her connection with Marketade, bring the entire group to the store with her—where they might all buy drinks—and then share the story with other friends online, as well. For Bryan, the convenience and timing of the offer would make rehydrating irresistible.

What's more, both Annie and Bryan would experience the offer as a personalized deal just for them, since it would be presented to them at the end of their unique jogging route. That personal touch would make it more likely that they would feel that the company was reaching out to them on an individual level – a definite ego-boost.

Once Savanna launched the campaign, Stan, as you'll recall, took over, adding his own analytics-based tweaks – which continued to speak to these customer personas. Sharing selfies with the drink in order to spread the deal to her friends was a no-brainer for Annie, who loved to be seen as associated with such a healthy brand, and loved to help her friends just as much. For Bryan, the selfie appealed to his sense of leadership—it allowed him to share insider fitness deals with his followers—as well as his desire to be viewed as serious about fitness.

Everything about this campaign was customer-focused, from its inception to its various iterations. Where before, marketers would have decided what message to broadcast to customers, now, brands listen to customers to determine what message customers want to broadcast about themselves, and craft marketing strategy around that desire. Old-school marketers would use the same campaign – and even overall strategy – for every customer, while successful marketers in the digital age segment their campaigns, sometimes even to the point of individualizing them for each customer.

The customer is not just king – the customer is the foundation for a whole new marketing approach, and the impetus that gets the marketing momentum going.

Going Viral: Customer Focus At Its Best

When a video or other piece of content begins to spread well beyond expectations, you know you've got marketing gold. But what is it that makes a campaign go viral? Sure, sometimes it's just the luck of the draw, a funny video that happens to get shared by the right person at the right time. But a more dependable way to cause a campaign to go viral is to make it personal. Tap into the emotions of the customer, make them feel that you understand them and that they are important to you, and your campaign will spread itself.

One example? The ALS Ice Bucket Challenge. By focusing on their audience as opposed to themselves, the association managed to raise hundreds of millions of dollars for ALS research. Since individuals were challenged to create their own videos, the campaign became personal, and tapped into everyone's innate desire to do good – and everyone's desire to be *seen* doing good.

Another example of a marketing campaign going viral is one the Marketing Zen team put together for a client of ours. This client sells call center software for 911 dispatch centers – programs that help train dispatchers, record calls, and make response times more efficient. Its customers are the managers of those dispatch centers - the people who work with their team of dispatchers every day, spend their time training and supporting them, are good friends with them . . . and who probably were once dispatchers themselves.

So when we started brainstorming ideas for a campaign that could go viral for our client, we made it personal. What would grip the hearts of dispatchers and their supervisors alike? How could our client show its customers that they understood them and were on their side?

We decided to write a touching tribute to 911 dispatchers, from the first person perspective. Here's what we came up with:

> I am a 911 dispatcher.
>
> I am the one who responds when you call out for help.
>
> I am the one who walks with you, hand-in-hand and step-by-step, during the most frightening events in your life.
>
> But you'll probably never meet me.
>
> I deliver babies. I administer CPR. I shield people from violence. I put out fires. I catch criminals.
>
> I save lives.
>
> And I do it all without ever leaving my station. I am there. For you.
>
> I became a 911 dispatcher to help. Every caller is a member of my community – a mother, a husband, a daughter, a brother, a friend – reaching out to me for help. To me.
>
> So I help them.
>
> I help them because I care. Sure, the days are long, and the calls are stressful. I wouldn't be human if the constant stream of tragedies didn't affect me. And they do affect me.

But I still care.

I care so much that I have nightmares about the screams. I care so much that I will never forget the fear, the panic, the pain in people's voices. I care so much that when I get home, I can't help but cry over the suffering in the world, and my helplessness to stop it.

Except that I'm not helpless.

I am a 911 dispatcher.

I am strong.

I am the refuge people fly to when they are in danger. I am the fortress holding back the darkness. I am the guardian angel who guides people through catastrophe unseen.

I am a 911 dispatcher.

And I am proud.

We imagined this heartfelt tribute would inspire dispatch center managers to share it with their dispatchers, and with other managers so those other managers could share it with their own teams. We imagined it being printed out, framed, given as a gift, circulated in an email, included in a newsletter. We hoped it would let our client's customers know just how much they cared.

We took this tribute and posted it on our client's blog, and then shared it across social media. Dispatchers instantly latched on to it, sharing it over and over again, on Facebook dispatcher pages, with friends who were dispatchers, on their own pages. At one point, it became a victim of its own success – a competitor actually copied and pasted the text of the tribute without giving credit to our client as the source and shared it with their audience! And as if that weren't bad enough, it immediately began going viral on the competitor's Facebook page, as well! We acted quickly to rectify the situation, insisting that the competitor give credit where credit was due, and soon the campaign was back on track, with our client firmly in the spotlight.

To this day, that blog post is the most popular one on our client's site – and it's been quite some time since we ran that campaign! It just goes to show that a focus on the customer really does create incredible marketing momentum.

Your Turn

So how can your company's marketing harness that same momentum by becoming more customer-focused?

It all starts with the customer personas. Who are your versions of Marketade's Annie and Bryan? You already created a more basic form of your personas in the last chapter, as you worked to lay the groundwork for agility. Now follow these steps to create your company's in-depth customer profiles, and take the first step towards a new customer focus:

1. Develop your questions.

The areas you'll need to focus on in your customer personas will vary based on whether your company is B2C or B2B. While a B2C marketer will want to know things about their customers' personal interests and families, a B2B marketer should focus more on job descriptions and business goals. So come up with a list of questions you want answered, in order to have the most comprehensive, 360 degree understanding of your customer persona possible.

For B2C, that might look something like this:

- What are my customers' basic demographics? Age, gender, marital status, children, occupation, income, education, location?
- What are my customers' personal interests, hobbies, passions, goals, and values?
- What is a day in the life of my customer like?
- Who are my customers' friends? How do they interact, online and in person?
- What are my customers' needs, problems, and pain points? What do they need help with?
- What image do my customers want to convey to others about themselves?
- Where do my customers hang out online, and what do they do there?
- Which blogs and websites do my customers visit?
- What are some obstacles that might prevent my customers from buying?
- What are my customers' expectations when it comes to brand experience?

For B2B, the list would, after the first question, look a bit different:

- What are my customers' basic demographics? Age, gender, occupation, industry, experience, company size, income, education, location?
- What are my customers' job descriptions, responsibilities in their places of work, and personal professional goals and values? What are their biggest challenges, and how do they overcome them?
- What are my customers' companies' goals? How are my customers involved in helping them reach those goals?
- What is a day in the life of my customer like? What does success look like to them?
- What tools do my customers use? What skills do they require?
- Who are my customers' colleagues, supervisors, subordinates? What are these relationships like? How does my customer go about keeping them all happy?
- What are my customers' business needs, problems, and pain points? What do they need help with? What would make them look better to their boss? What would make life easier for them?
- Where do my customers hang out online in a professional capacity, and what do they do there?
- Which industry sites and blogs do my customers follow?
- What are some obstacles that might prevent my customers from buying?
- What are my customers' expectations when it comes to brand experience?

Add more questions as needed to tailor the information to your company. These questions will guide all the research you do and inform the personas you create, so be sure to spend ample time making them comprehensive.

2. Do your research.

The next step is to take your list of questions and start answering them, based on data you already have. Notice I said based on *data* – not on intuition or opinion or hopes or guesses or preconceived notions. And be sure the data you use isn't outdated. Access the customer data you have stored in the marketing automation software we discussed in the last chapter. Check Google Analytics, peek into the back ends of your social media accounts, look at the customer data you've already collected through any other medium. Fill in as much of the information as you can with your existing data.

3. Gather more data—by asking for it.

At this point, you're sure to have questions that still need answering. The solution? Ask your current customers! Interview them on the phone or via email. Send out surveys via email, and offer an incentive for answering. Put a form on your website to capture more detailed information. And don't forget to talk to your sales team, if you have one – they often have insight into customer trends that others may miss.

4. Spend time listening on social media.

The gaps are getting smaller, and now it's just a matter of getting those last details. Go where your customers (and others who fit the same profile) are online, and just listen. Which social media platforms do they prefer? Facebook? LinkedIn? Pinterest? Which social media groups do they belong to and actively participate in? Google+ communities? LinkedIn Groups? Listen in on those conversations. What types of content are they sharing and discussing? Which blogs do they recommend – or even write themselves? Which influencers drive thought in their circles? This information can be some of the most important in your marketing strategy.

5. Create your personas and their stories.

Finally! It's time to put it all together. Choose a name, pick a photo to go with it, and then write up your customer persona's story. Don't be surprised if you end up with two, three, or even more different personas – as long as they can each be clearly defined through a unique story.

6. Test your assumptions.

If you were paying attention in the last chapter, you'll know you aren't done yet. Testing and tweaking is just as vital here as it is in any other aspect of new paradigm marketing. Appeal to your target personas directly. Try out a few of the marketing tactics you imagine will work well with them. Then take a look at the data, analyze the response, tweak your personas or your approach to marketing to them, and try again. Soon you'll have a detailed, increasingly accurate understanding of exactly who your customers are and how best to appeal to them.

Customer Focus Tools

I'd be remiss if I didn't share a list of some of the top tools available to help you gather information on your customers' social media activity. One way to do this is to search on

those social media platforms for mentions of your company's name – who else would be talking about you, other than your customers or your potential customers?

There are many, many social listening tools out there, but these are a few of my favorites:

- Hootsuite and Tweetdeck – Both of these tools allow you to scan Twitter in real-time, looking for posts that include your company's name even if they don't tag you or use your hashtag.
- Social Mention – This tool gathers data on mentions of your company name from multiple social media platforms – Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, etc. – and then even lets you know whether overall sentiment towards your company is positive or negative.
- Topsy – This tool gathers similar data as Social Mention, but from both social media and blogs.
- Icerocket – This tool focuses mainly on mentions in blogs, but can also check image sites such as Flickr.
- Google Alerts – While this tool won't scan social media or blogs for you, it will let you know whenever your company's name is mentioned on any other website.

Customer Focus Tips

With your data-driven customer personas in hand, you're now ready to start creating marketing strategies and campaigns based on them. That's an important first step . . . but that's not all there is to customer-focused marketing.

Every single action you take should be centered around the customer and their needs and wants. Here are some tips to making *everything* revolve around the customer:

1. Create every marketing strategy by first putting yourself in your customers' shoes.

Don't just look from the outside when coming up with ideas – put yourself inside each of your customer personas. Imagine that you were a mom into fitness but on a budget. What kind of marketing content would catch your eye? What would convince you to spend your money? Don't make the mistake of "telling" your personas what they should be interested in. Look at the world through their eyes to find out, instead.

2. Make it all about them.

Your entire focus in marketing should be not on marketing your company to your customers, but on giving your customers the spotlight via your company. How can you make your customers the stars of your marketing campaigns? Tap into their interests and desires to find the right approach, and then take a back seat while you let them shine.

3. Let customers know about your shared values.

Customers love companies that support a cause. But they especially love companies that support a cause near and dear to *their* hearts. And when a customer buys your products, that gives you a good idea of where their interests lie. While it's certainly praiseworthy to support your own personal charity of choice, just imagine how much your efforts can be

amplified if you chose a charity that aligned with your customers' values, as well. You may be passionate about feeding the poor – but if your company sells business software, it just isn't a natural fit to donate part of your profits to a food bank. Instead, lend your support to a cause relevant to your businesspeople customers – a program training disadvantaged youth to become business leaders, for example.

If donating to charity isn't your thing, share your company's *raison d'etre* with your customers – if it's heartfelt, it will resonate. Maybe you are devoted to health and fitness, or to educating young children, or to helping business grow. Anyone buying your products or services is obviously also interested in the same thing, and will appreciate your passion for something they see as important, too.

Make your values a major part of your branding, so people associate them with your company automatically. That way, your customers will be proud to let others know that they do business with you.

4. Have conversations, don't recite monologues.

Customers today want to be a part of the action, to actively build two-way relationships with brands, rather than passively being talked at. A social media post aimed at a general audience and not giving any reason to engage will be ignored. A post aimed at a specific persona and asking for feedback or opinions or some other form of dialogue will make customers feel valued and attract engagement.

5. Provide amazing customer service.

Don't think marketing and customer service belong in the same arena? Think again. Social media, one of your chief marketing tools, is also one of the first places customers turn to express frustration, share their appreciation, or even ask a company for help. Answering customer questions and responding to comments both positive and negative will go a long way towards letting all your customers know that you take their concerns seriously.

6. Never stop asking how you can help.

Customers' needs and preferences change over time, so assuming they'll want to receive that same email newsletter a year from now, or that Facebook will still be their favorite place to hang out online in two years, can lead to problems. If you don't adapt your strategy to fit your customers' current situation, you will lose them. To prevent this from happening, keep asking questions. Include a question in every marketing email asking whether they'd like to change the types of emails they receive from you. Watch your analytics carefully to see whether your target audience has shifted and now spends more time on Pinterest than on Facebook. Ask customers outright whether their needs have changed.

Gathering this kind of data will keep your finger on the pulse of your target audience. Not only will this let your customers see that you truly care about their preferences, but it will also enable you to make the kind of continual changes that let your marketing strategy grow more and more effective.

7. Make friends with their friends.

Have you ever heard of the psychological principle called *triadic closure*? It says that two people are more likely to be closer friends if they both share a third friend in common. People like closing gaps in their social networks, and having a third friend in common gives them even more reason to trust each other. How can you use this principle to your advantage?

Connect with an influencer.

Choose a well-known figure in your industry and develop a relationship with them. It might start out with some social media banter, then morph into a guest blogging opportunity, and finally evolve into a joint webinar. Or you might just agree to promote each other's products in your own emails or social media posts.

Whatever course your friendship takes, it will benefit you both. Why? Because people in your audience who already liked that influencer will now like you even more, knowing that you two are connected – and vice versa.

8. Create content for customers' every need.

Customers today want to educate themselves fully about a product or service online before they begin talking to a salesperson or set foot in a store. As they research and come closer and closer to a decision, they move through the various stages of the sales funnel, evolving from casual visitors to committed customers. Create content for people who are just looking for basic information, as well as for those who are interested in more in-depth explanations, comparisons, and case studies. If you become the resource they turn to again and again at every stage of their journey, your company will be top of mind – and will have inspired confidence and trust as an industry expert – when they make their final decision.

9. Make that content easy to read and remember.

The human brain is hardwired to respond to stories. Researchers have found that when you're listening to a particularly boring class lecture, or reading a list of bullet points in a blog, the only parts of your brain that are activated are the language processing centers. That's it.

But when you listen to a story, suddenly a bunch of other parts of your brain get involved, too. If the story has action, your brain's motor cortex lights up. If the story describes the way something looks or smells or feels, your brain's sensory cortex lights up.

Scientists actually did an experiment where they monitored the brain of a person telling a story along with the brains of the people listening to that story. And what they found out was amazing: The storyteller was able to synchronize her audience's brain waves with her own. When the emotional center in her brain was activated by a part of her story – so was her listeners'! The same was true for *all* of her brain's activity. She was basically able to transfer her thoughts and feelings into their heads, just by telling them a story.

You can use the way people respond to stories to help you in your business. The stories we remember most are the ones that make us feel a strong emotion. Maybe they make us laugh. Maybe they terrify us. Maybe they make us feel outraged, or hopeful, or excited. In using a

compelling story as part of your marketing, it doesn't matter which emotion you tap into – just as long as you tap into one.

Most importantly, *make your customers the heroes of the story.* Sure, they'd rather hear about how your business can help them than about how great your product or service is – benefits rather than features. But they'd rather hear *even more* about how, just by buying your product, they can be as successful as the guy in your story – or how they can avoid being as dumb as the guy in your story by giving your service a try.

When you share your message as a story, and then give your customers a way to enter your story and come out the hero, you know your marketing is truly customer-focused.

<sidebar>**A Company Getting It Right**

Fiskars , a scissor company with a more than 360-year history, conducted some research and found that scrapbookers didn't really care about their specific tools, but were very passionate about expressing their interest in their scrapbooking hobby online. To tap into this user interest, the brand reached out to scrapbook influencers via its "Fisk-a-teer" community and campaign. This effort included physically going to scrapbook bloggers, asking them to show Fiskars what they did and share their life. They then actually began hiring Fisk-a-teers, who were brought into the company's headquarters to be immersed in - and get excited about – the company's scrapbooking products. Those new employees served as leaders at the Fisk-a-teer online community, answering audience questions, attending scrapbook trade shows, running live chats, and blogging. Although these paid brand advocates were employees of Fiskars, they were encouraged to cover all the various scrapbook tools they were using, Fiskar's branded and not.

Although the key goal of the campaign was simply raising brand awareness with the scrapbooking audience, the team also was able to get product development insight from Fisk-a-teer community feedback, as well as a greater understanding of what new products were most likely to be popular.

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<sidebar>**A Company Getting It Right**

The global software company SAP is engaged in customer-centric marketing by making use of customer testimonials in its webinar campaigns. In a campaign based around a new memory technology, SAP HANA, they featured that product's customers in webcasts where they would share their experience with the product and explain how the product eases tech pain points. The company even allowed viewers to directly ask the customer presenters questions about the product. Scott Feldman, Global Head of the SAP HANA Customer Community, SAP, said, "An intelligent campaign [that involves] hear[ing] the story about your solutions and how they're impacting customers — but hearing that story directly from the customer and not the vendor — really resonates with other customers."

A key lesson here is that B2B prospects want to hear more than just marketing messages, and that third-party validation – such as customer testimonials in this case, or opinions from thought leaders in the overall marketplace that emphasize the value of your offering - is a powerful way to reach your audience. When your messaging features independent,

third-party resources—and prospects trust what those resources have to say—prospects are more likely to trust your overall marketing messaging.

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Customer focus means so much more than targeting a certain demographic with your marketing, or finding out what a focus group says about your marketing tactics. It is a completely different mindset in which the customer becomes an active participant in every marketing strategy and campaign. Whether that action occurs through sharing an offer on social media or uploading pictures or videos of themselves engaging with a brand, it ensures that the focus is on the customer, not the company. When marketing becomes personal, momentum is the natural result.

Chapter 3 Takeaways:

- **Customer focus means identifying who your customers are, listening to (and acting on) their input and feedback, personalizing their experience with your company, and being a brand whose values they want to be associated with.**
- **Customer personas are essential to a customer-focused marketing strategy, because they enable marketers to specialize content.**
- **Create your personas by compiling a list of questions to ask, gathering data to answer them, listening on social media to collect more details, and then testing your assumptions.**
- **Using social media listening tools can help you keep tabs on what people are saying about your company, as well as giving you valuable insight into where your customers hang out online.**
- **Shared values, great customer service, solicitous questions, helpful content, two-way conversations, relationships with influencers, and stories are all signs of a customer-focused marketing strategy.**